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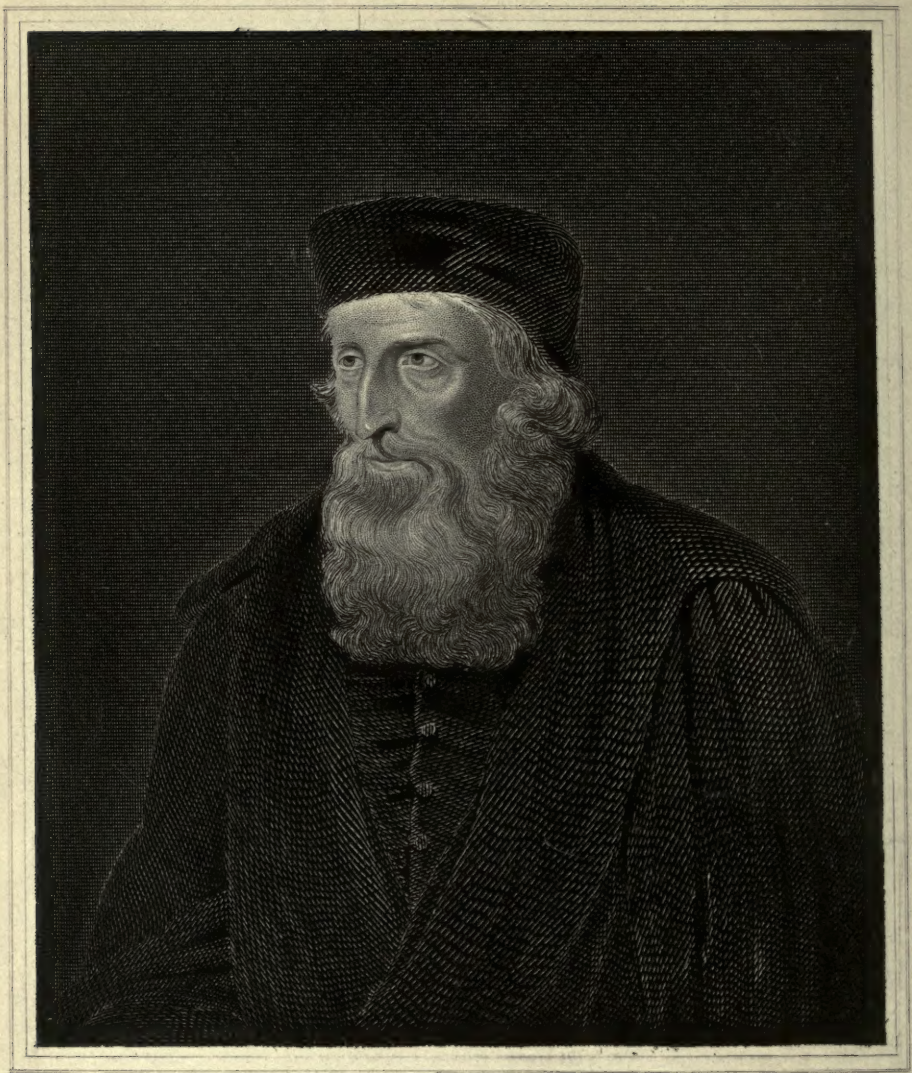












JOHN de WYCLIFFE, D.D.

*Engraved by Edw. Tindal, from the original picture by Sir Antonio More,  
now an herileon in the Rectory of Wycliffe, - Richmondshire.*



JOHN DE WYCLIFFE, D.D.

A

Monograph.

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE WYCLIFFE MSS. IN OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, THE BRITISH MUSEUM, LAMBETH PALACE, AND TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

By ROBERT VAUGHAN, D.D.



Wycliffe Church.

Serleys,

FLEET STREET AND HANOVER STREET.

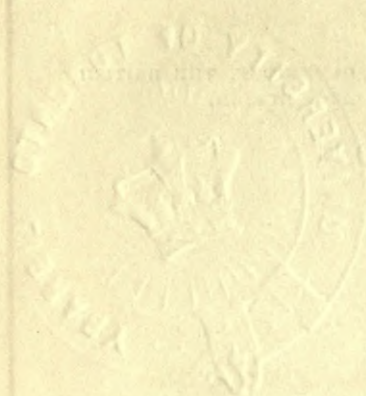
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JOHN DE WYCKHOUT, D.D.

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## PREFACE.

NEARLY a quarter of a century has passed since the publication of my work intitled the 'Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe.' Those volumes, I may venture to say, were the result of much research and labour. But they were the production of a young man, unknown to the world of letters, and without patronage from any of the gifted minds then flourishing in that world. The public were so far pleased with what I had done, that my publishers deemed it prudent to issue a second edition. The work, however, has long been out of print; and in looking back over the two thousand miles and more, which I travelled in those old stage-coach days, to acquaint myself with the contents of manuscripts, not a few of which had been all but utterly neglected since the time of the Wars of the Roses, I have often felt disposed to return to this subject. The materials thus brought together, and properly my own, were valuable, and are still so—and have sufficed to secure for the work in which they were published, the place assigned to it by some of our first continental scholars, as the most satis-



factory book upon its subject. But it will occasion no surprise if I say, that what I did with those materials many years ago, is not what I have since felt might be done with them. My wish in giving my thoughts again to this theme has been, to bring to it the fruit of further research, and by re-casting and re-writing the whole, to make a more adequate use of the material at my disposal, and to present the general subject in a form likely to make the character of Wycliffe, as it appears in these pages, better known among my countrymen.

This, good reader, I have done—or, at least, have aimed to do. I have returned to an old subject, as to a scene of my youth, and have endeavoured to renew some fellowships of thought there that were very pleasant to me in times long past.

The only publication in our language that could with any propriety be described as a life of Wycliffe, prior to the appearance of my former work, was the volume published by Mr. Lewis, which appeared early in the last century. Mr. Lewis printed some valuable documents, and extracts from documents, relating to certain points in the history of the Reformer, and for these any successor in the same path must have felt deeply indebted to him. But his acquaintance with the writings of Wycliffe was very limited. Of the date of the Wycliffe manuscripts, even of those from which he quotes, he was generally ignorant. From these causes, his account is not only meagre, but confused, and adapted, in many



respects, to convey a false and mischievous impression. The Opinions of Wycliffe have a history. His mind did not become at once all that it became ultimately. But Mr. Lewis often cites him as giving utterance at a comparatively early period of his career, to opinions which he did not avow until long afterwards. The enemies of the Reformer have not been slow in making their own uses of such oversights. On the authority of Mr. Lewis, they have represented Wycliffe as saying and unsaying, according to the exigencies of his career; while in truth—as the ensuing pages will I think demonstrate—nothing could be more foreign from his character, or more unlike the facts of his history. My predecessor did good service up to a certain point: I frankly confess my obligations to him; but no man of intelligence can have read his volume, without feeling that something very different is needed on the subject to which it relates.

Mr. Le Bas's well-written narrative, intitled 'The Life of Wiclif,' appeared subsequently to my former work, and owes nearly all its value, so far as material from manuscripts is concerned, to my own pages—a debt, I should add, which the author has very frankly acknowledged.

It will be seen, that in the extracts from the English writings of the Reformer, the old orthography has been discarded, but the reader may be assured that the substance of the author's language, both as to words and idioms, has been faithfully retained.

It should be added, that care has been taken, that the Index, as well as the general plan of the work, should be such as to facilitate reference to the more important matters included in the volume.

Unhappily, there is but too much reason for directing the attention of the men of our time to a topic of this nature. The corruptions unmasked and denounced so boldly by Wycliffe, are still rooted in the social state of Europe, and still find lodgment among ourselves. Our great Proto-Reformer attributes no mischief—social, moral, or religious—to the errors of Romanism, that we do not see presenting itself at this hour over the half of Europe as the fruit natural to those errors. All honour!—say I, to the man, who, amidst the turbulence and tyranny of the fourteenth century, could school students in Oxford after this wise.—‘*Christ wished his law to be observed WILLINGLY, FREELY, that in such obedience men might find happiness. Hence he appointed NO CIVIL PUNISHMENT to be inflicted on the transgressors of his commandments, but left the persons neglecting them to the suffering which shall come after the day of doom.*’—(Trialogus, Lib. III. c. 3.)

ROBERT VAUGHAN.

*College—Moss-side,  
near Manchester,  
March 30, 1853.*



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## ENGRAVINGS.

In the interior of Wycliffe Church the artist has dispensed with the modern deal pewing by which it is disfigured. The exterior presents the edifice as it *is*, the interior, as it *was*. The interior of Lutterworth Church also, gives the view of the building as it was in the time of Wycliffe. Since then, the screen has been removed to a neighbouring Church, and the pulpit has been placed before the middle of the chancel. This change took place when it was determined further to impair the beauty of the structure by the erection of galleries. I should add, that at Lutterworth the spire does not now appear on the tower ; but it so stood in the time of Wycliffe, and a model of it has been preserved in the church since the time of the thunderstorm by which it was destroyed. The present bridge also, crossing the river, has been erected within the memory of persons still living. The bridges over such rivers in the fourteenth century were mostly rude wooden structures. The houses built of late years near the river are not, of course, introduced. The other Engravings give the objects as they at present appear.

### \*.\* DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

PORTRAIT, opposite the Title-page.

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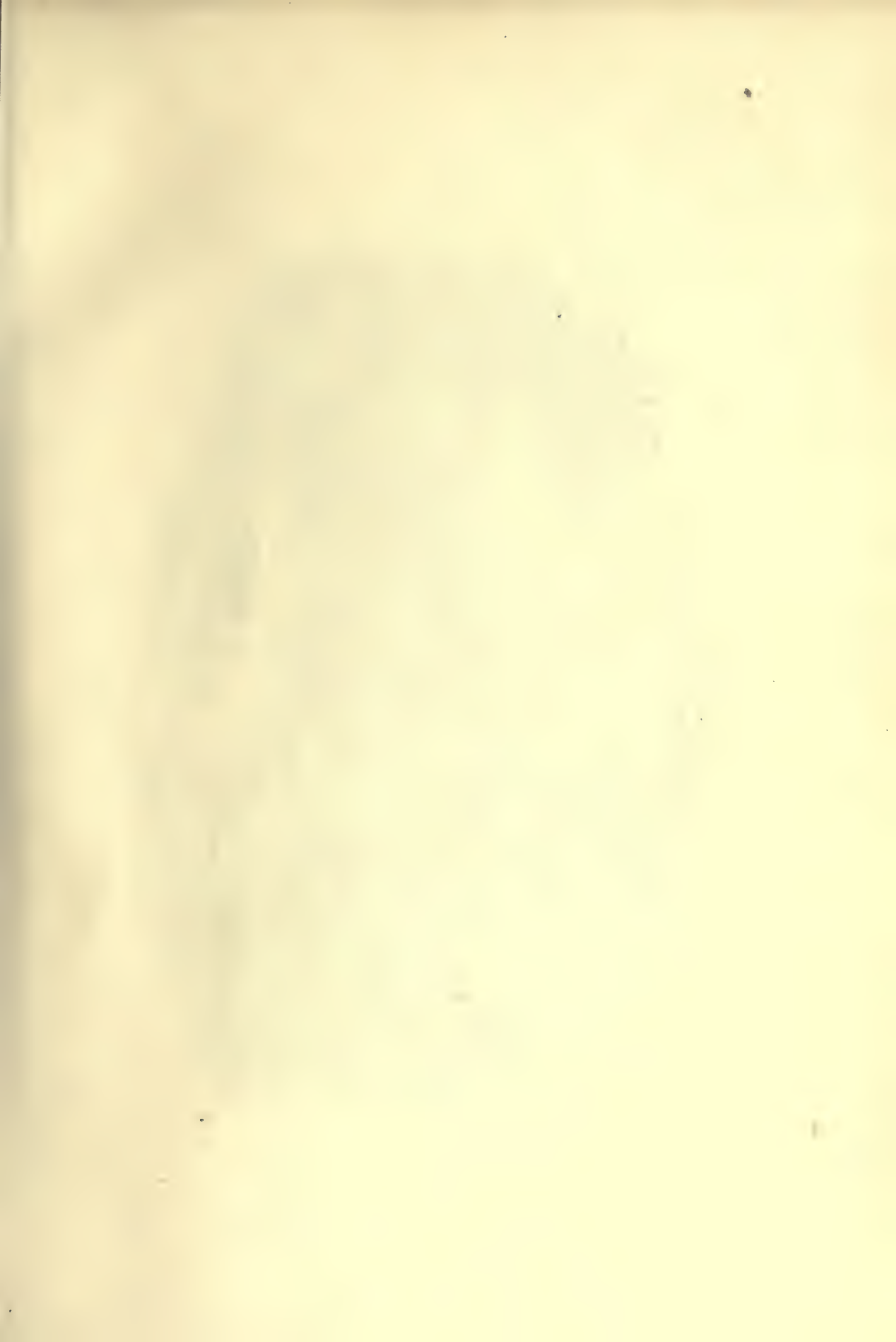
EXTERIOR OF LUTTERWORTH CHURCH, opposite page 375.

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J. H. W. T. P. S. C.

Wycliffe.





# JOHN DE WYCLIFFE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### WYCLIFFE AND THE WYCLIFFES.



THE reader who has once passed through the valley of Yorkshire to which the river Tees gives the name of Tees-dale, will not need description from us to call up the pictures which have there arrested his attention and delighted him. But the portion of that valley in which *we* feel the deepest interest, has never been touched by any of our high-roads since the old Romans laid down their great military pathway in that direction ; and since that remote time, has not been much traversed by the foot of the stranger. In many a nook of it, the pedestrian feels as one parted off from the rush and noise of the world. We pity him, indeed, if there be not moments in which he is disposed to think that the only motion in

the world must be that of the floating clouds, the graceful woods, or of the unseen elements around him ; and the only sounds, such as come from those elements, from the birds that people them, or from the swell and fall of distant waters. The hills about him lift themselves up as if to wall out the pomps and strifes of the world ; while the woods and verdure with which they are clothed on every side, and the overshadowed glens through which the Greta sends her shouting flood, or through which the Tees floats on, here over its shallow bed of rock or pebbles, there in a noble breadth and fulness, all are of a nature to dispose the new-comer to be still and thoughtful—to dream as the poet dreams.

On the banks of the Tees, at a point eleven miles northward from the good town of Richmond, and five miles distance below the point where that river glides along beneath the walls of Bernard Castle, there is a rocky wood-crowned height which commands a view of the Tees, and of much beside, that may well incline the meditative traveller to halt for a while. You there see the river floating into view from the right, round a high projecting meadow land, something more than a mile distant. Passing that point, its current turns in an opposite direction, and is seen on this side the descending cape around which it has passed, as if intent on making its way through some new channel to the source from which it came. But the high grounds on either side do their office like sentinels, pointing the



stream to its course: and it bounds along obediently in curves of the richest beauty, until you see its full, dark flood, rolling far beneath you, your gaze upon it, from your high wall of rock and wood, being like a glance from the loftiest ship-mast down into the deep sea. On the opposite side of the river, the grounds are mostly pasture lands, but broken up into a succession of undulating elevations, thickly wooded, and with intersections of rock near the water. To the left of the high-ground on which you stand, the river is shut in by a continuance of the steep and woody eminence beneath you, which terminates at about a furlong distance in another projecting point of rock, out of which a mansion, of moderate dimensions and irregular form, seems to grow castle-ways: while the rock on which the structure rests, descends with one surface towards the river, with the other into a deep ravine crossed by a bridge, over which you pass to reach the side entrance in the direction now facing you. In the midst of a space of bright greensward, some way below that rock-lifted dwelling, and almost on a level with the river, whose waters play upon its verdant edges as they pass, is a small church. It has no pretension to beauty. It is an elongated building, without spire or tower, with a flat lead-covered roof, and with rows of antique gothic windows, and porch on either side. But it is covered in part with ivy, and with the adjuncts of its place is a pleasant thing to look upon.

The scene before you, good reader, forms the centre

of the small parish of Wycliffe—the meaning of that word being simply the ‘Wye-cliffe,’ the ‘Water-cliffe,’ or the ‘Clift near the water :’ and the description given in that word, as pointing to the towering clift on which you stand, and to the waters which force their way so swiftly at its base, is most truthful. That small church upon the greensward is Wycliffe church. That house which seems to spring out of the rock at the summit of the meadow ascending steeply from the church, is a continuance of the mansion of the Wycliffe family. To that family pertained the lordship of the manor of Wycliffe, and the patronage of the rectory, from the age of William the Norman down to very recent times. Raby Castle, only a short distance at one point of an angle, and Bernard Castle, about the same distance at another point, suggest to us something of the manner in which this district was castle-kept in the bygone days of turbulence and oppression. The modern mansion, in the outward face of it, is nearly all modern ; and in the aspect which is intended to be its best it is common-place enough. The Wycliffes ceased in 1606 to be inheritors of this property and lordship. The name of Tunstall then came by marriage into the place of Wycliffe ; and in our own time, the name of Tunstall has given place to that of Constable.

That our reformer Wycliffe drew his first breath in the house which stood in the early years of the fourteenth century on the brow of that meadow slope, overlooking the river Tees, is, with us, a point believed and settled.



Our most respectable antiquary, John Leland, writing about a hundred and fifty years after the decease of Wycliffe, when making mention, in his notes on the places of this district, of the parish of Wycliffe, adds these words, 'unde Wigclif hereticus originem duxit.'<sup>1</sup> It must not be concealed, however, that our learned friend writes elsewhere after this wise. 'They say that 'John Wiclif, hereticus, was born at Spreswel, a poor 'village, a good mile from Richmont.'<sup>2</sup> And our learned modern, Dr. Whitaker, has given more heed than is due to this last saying.<sup>3</sup> Leland, in hope of acquiting himself like a good workman in his topographical labours, travelled much, and at a time when travelling had but little of our own speed or convenience to commend it. But he took much upon hearsay—could not help so doing: and among his hearsays is this saying about Spreswel. An authority, which with us is decisive on this subject, assures us, that 'there neither is *now*, nor *was there ever*, a place of that name in Richmondshire.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collectanea, Tom. I. part II. p. 329.

<sup>2</sup> Itinerary, v. 9.

<sup>3</sup> History of Richmondshire. I 197.

<sup>4</sup> The Rev. James Raine, M.A., Librarian to the Dean and Chapter Library, Durham; a gentleman too well known among such as have given any attention to our Northern antiquities, to need commendation from us. The first sentence in Lewis, states that, 'Wiclif was born in the parish of Wiclif;' but at the foot of the page he cites the above statement from Leland about Spreswel, not being aware, it would seem, that if Spreswel was 'a poor village, a good mile from Richmont,' it must have been at least ten miles from 'Wiclif.'

Leland, whose acquaintance with Richmondshire was so defective, that he places the rise of the Tees in a field near Caldwell, some fifty miles from its real source, could not have spoken with the confidence of our correspondent on this subject. But Dr. Whitaker should have been better informed.

We should mention in this place, that in the time of Charles the first a clerk in a parish adjoining the parish of Wycliffe, Birkbeck by name, wrote a work intituled 'The Protestant Evidence,' a book of learning and ability ; and he there gives the tradition of the district concerning Wycliffe, as being the birth-place of the reformer, as a tradition which no man questioned. To the same effect is the suffrage of Dr. Zouch, rector of Wycliffe at the close of the last century. Dr. Zouch, the biographer of Sir Philip Sidney, thus writes on the back of the picture from which our engraving of the portrait of the Reformer is taken. 'Thomas Zouch, A.M., formerly 'Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Rector of 'Wycliff, gives this original picture of the great John 'Wycliffe, *a native of this parish*, to his successors, the 'rectors of Wycliffe, who are requested to preserve it, as 'a heir-loom in the rectory house.' This endorsing gives us the faith of Dr. Zouch on this article.

We have also ourselves learnt, that less than forty years since, there was an old man living in the parish of Wycliffe, who, though in humble condition, claimed to be a descendant of the Wycliffe family. He was tall, of



poor presence, and those who knew him often spoke of the strong resemblance between his features and those given in the portrait of the great Reformer. The Tunstalls so far acknowledged the claims of this person, as to assign him a small pension. He carried himself high, though poor; never put his hand to common labour. His turn was towards mechanics. He was the great regulator of time to the neighbourhood. He laid a sort of claim to the supervision of all clocks and watches, which he adjusted, repaired, and kept to the hour, by means of two watches of his own, which he always wore about with him, one in each pocket of his waistcoat, for the purpose. In this capacity he made his periodical calls upon his friends, had his gossip, took his refreshment, and then, with some stateliness of manner, bowed them good-day.

In brief, the name of Wycliffe is assuredly a local name—John de Wycliffe—John *of* Wycliffe: and this is the only locality in England from which it *could* have been derived. Nor is there the slightest reason to suppose that there was a second family in the very small parish of Wycliffe in circumstances to send a son to Oxford, and to sustain him there for a series of years at his own charges, as was manifestly the case with the Wycliffe who has his place at the head of the succession among us distinguished as protesters against Rome.

It is true, in the very slender information we possess concerning the pedigree of the Wycliffes of Wycliffe, in the fourteenth century, we find no mention of a John de

Wycliffe, except in the person, who, during the life-time of the reformer, was at the head of that family, and who appointed Robert de Wycliffe to the rectory, in 1362; and William de Wycliffe to it in the year following.<sup>1</sup> Not less barren of information in this respect is the subsequent history of the family. Often does it happen that no one dreams of putting upon record what every one is supposed to know. What is notorious to ourselves, must, of course, be notorious to all time to come. Beside which, strange as it may seem, that house upon the rock there, the birth-place of the greatest of our reformers, has been, from that age to our own, an asylum of Romanism. Wycliffes, Tunstals, Constables, all have gone one way.<sup>2</sup> Hence, to this day, the parish of Wycliffe, with its population of something less than two hundred souls, is about equally divided between the two religions. The changes of the last three hundred years seem to have swept by this little enclosure almost without touching it.

It was on the morning of the sabbath that we obtained our first view of this secluded spot from the clift that rises above its waters. The sun shed its full splendour on the woods, to which the autumn had given its many colours; and on the green earth, which, near the church, shone out as if overlaid with yellow gold. The bell gave forth its note to call the devout to worship; but

<sup>1</sup> Whitaker's Richmondshire, I. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix A and C.



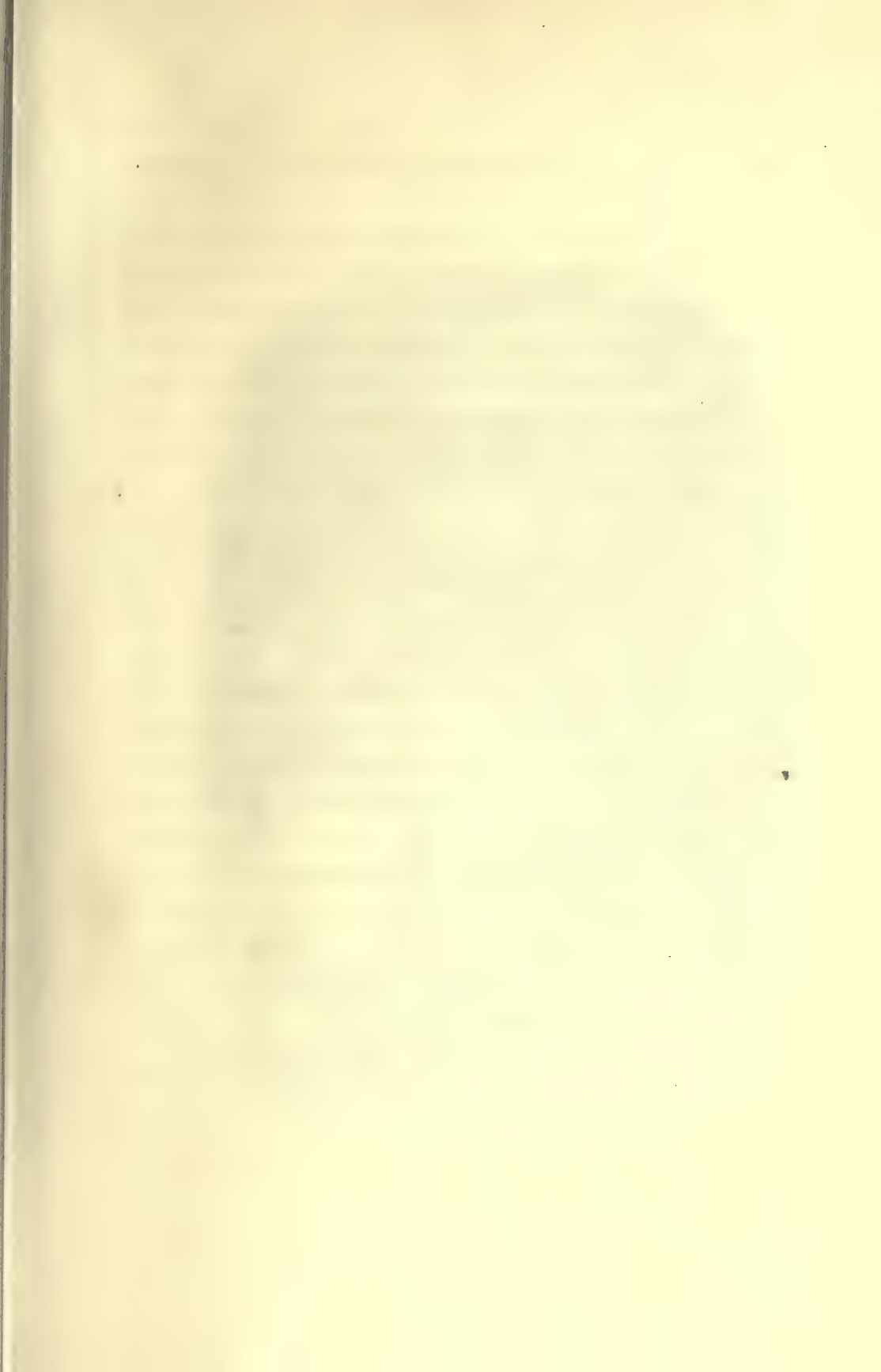
while one half of the village population bent their steps towards the parish church, we saw the other half, with their mass-books in their hands, on their way to the Romanist chapel perpetuated in the house which stands on the site of the ancient mansion of the Wycliffes. In a family holding thus steadily to the faith of the middle age, there would be no disposition to cherish the memory of relationship to a heretic so notorious as John de Wycliffe. The reaction in every thing social and religious, which came on immediately after the death of Wycliffe, and which continued for more than a century, placed a sea of troubles between the age of our Reformer and the age of Luther. Much that would otherwise have been preserved was thus lost. Had the great reformation succeeded at once, in place of being delayed to some hundred and fifty years later, the tendency would have been to hoard up whatever men knew about Wycliffe, and not to allow such knowledge to drop, vestige after vestige, into forgetfulness. His own family, as we have seen, were in this reaction. In feudal times, men of such position deprecated few things so much as to see the stain of treason on their escutcheon; and so, with many, if there might be a deeper stain than that, it would be the stain of heresy. Wycliffe himself, in his later life so wrote concerning this feeling, as to warrant the inference that he wrote, not only of what he had seen, but of that which had been an experience of his own. It is to the effect following, that he learnt to

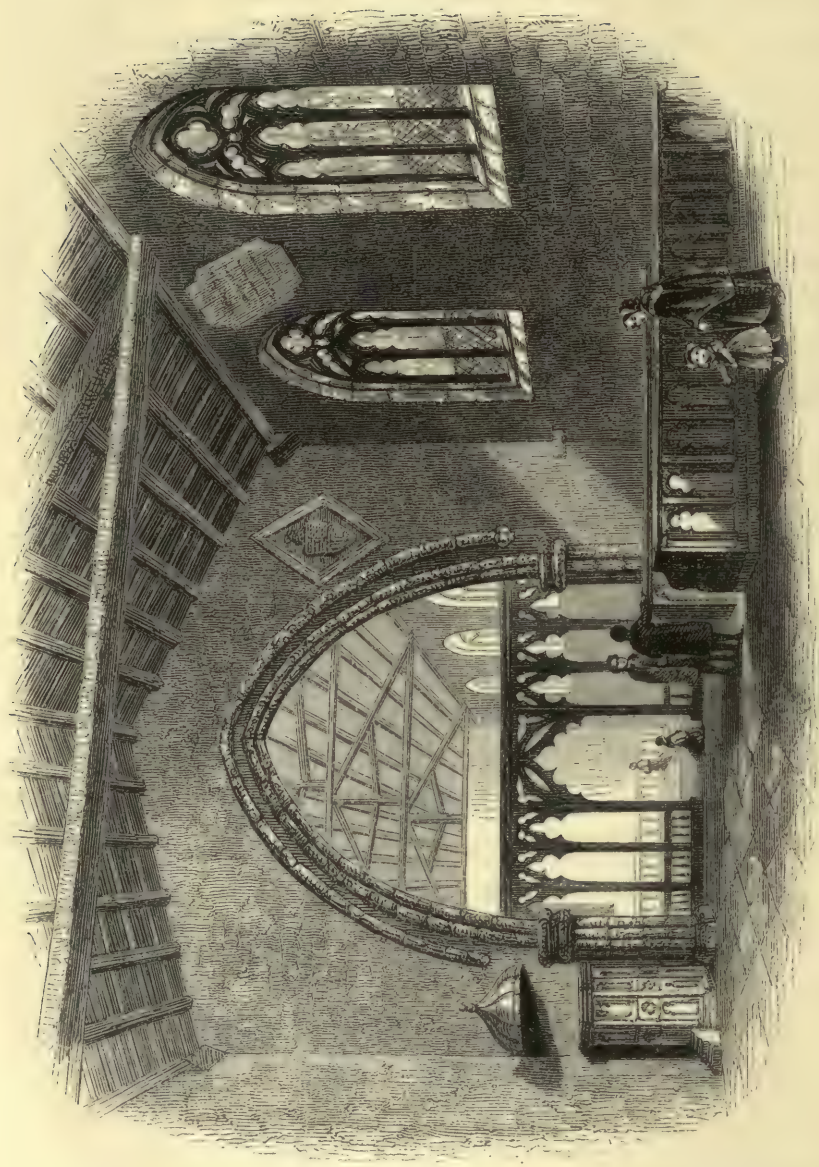
wield our then half-formed mother tongue on such themes. ' There are three faults happening many times to wedded ' men and women. The first is, that they sorrow over ' their children if they are naked or poor, but they reckon ' it as nothing that their souls are unclothed with virtues. ' With much travail and cost, also, they get great riches, ' and estates, and benefices, for their children, and often ' to their great damnation ; but they incline not to get ' for their children the goods of grace, and of a virtuous ' life. Nor will they suffer them to retain such goods, as ' freely proffered to them of God ; but hinder it, as much ' as they may, saying, if a child yield himself to meekness ' and poverty, and flee covetousness and pride, from a ' dread of sin, and to please God, that he shall never be- ' come a man, never cost them a penny ; and *they curse ' him because he liveth well, and will teach other men the ' will of God, to save their souls. For they say, that by so ' doing he getteth many enemies to his elders, that he slan- ' dereth all their noble kindred, who were ever held true men ' and worshipful !*'<sup>1</sup> We may here venture to say, that we have read much in the manuscripts preserved from the pen of Wycliffe ; and that from the freedom with which he gives expression, almost perpetually, to personal feeling, we have often felt the total absence of any reference to his own family relationship, as suggesting that

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<sup>1</sup> MS. On Wedded Men and Wives. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.







Wycliffe Church in 1840.



his heretical course had exposed him to the kind of disownment set forth in this extract. Highly probable is it, that in the view of his kinsman, he was a man who, by his public teaching, though with the pretence of saving souls, had brought dishonour on his 'noble kindred, who 'were ever held true men and worshipful.'

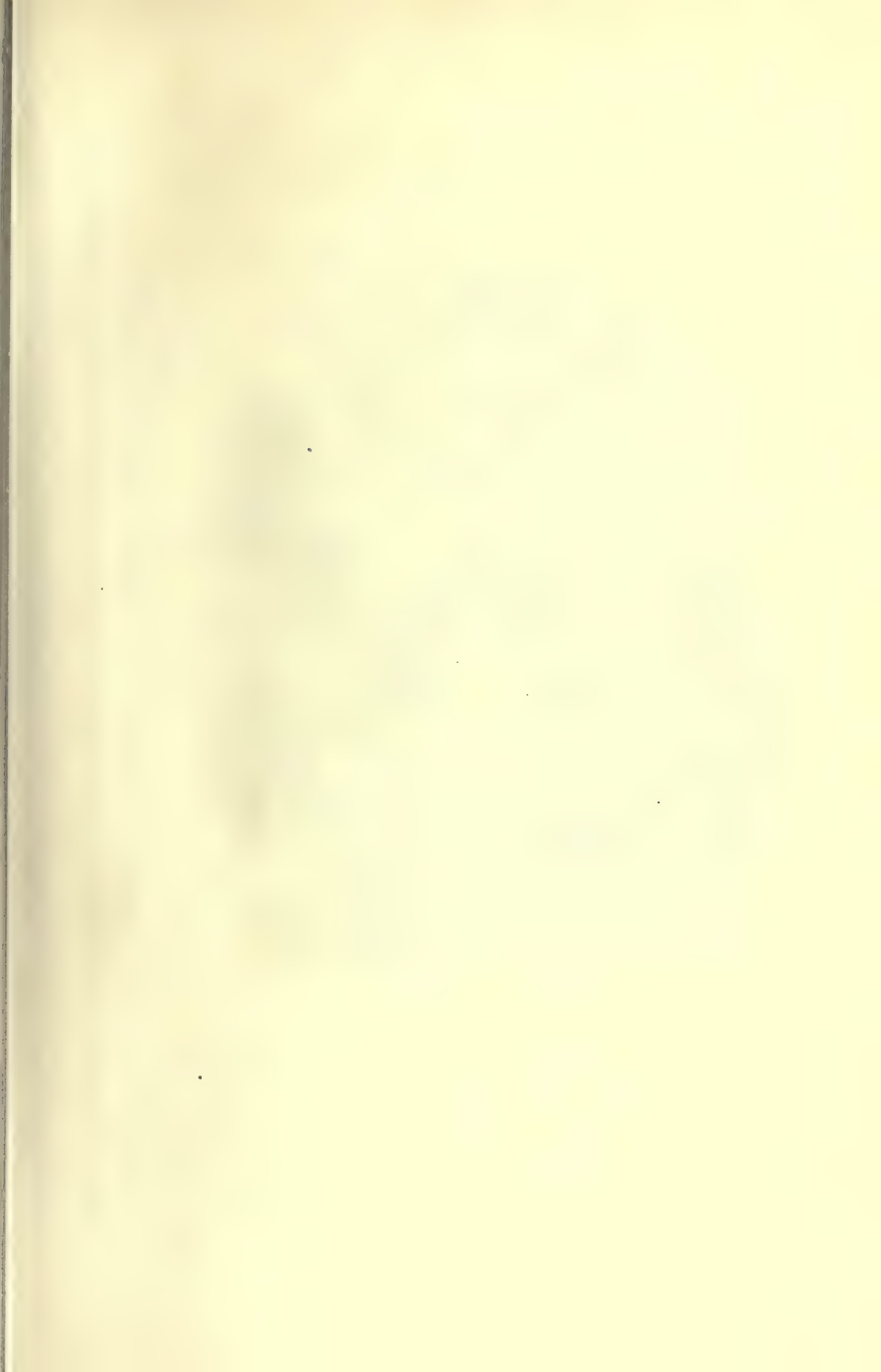
We have said that little or nothing remains of the edifice in which Wycliffe was born: the same, however, may not be said of the font at which he was baptized, nor of the church in which he knelt as a youth in worship. Beyond doubt Wycliffe church is, in the main, older than the age of the Reformer. As in the case of many very ancient churches, you descend by steps to the pavement, the level of the soil on the outside being higher than the ancient level of the floor within the walls—from this cause, and partly, perhaps, from the flat-surfaced roof stretched upon them, they shew signs of damp. The windows retain some of their painted glass from times before the Reformation. Our puritan iconoclasts appear to have done some execution on certain emblems of idolatry which once formed a part of their ornament. But there is a figure of the Virgin and child that has suffered but little from mutilation. As we worshipped on that ancient floor, and within those ancient walls, we could not but remember whence those liturgical services had descended which the people about us were repeating in their native tongue; and could imagine the young Wycliffe as present there some five centuries ago, and

giving forth to the echo of those old walls the utterance of the same devout thoughts clothed in their pristine Latin.

The date of the birth of Wycliffe is fixed by all who have concerned themselves with his history, in 1324. It is certain that he entered as a student in Oxford in 1340; and for reasons that will presently be given, we may take this fact as decisive against fixing his birth in a later year, whatever might be our conjecture in favour of an earlier.

How Wycliffe passed his boyhood; where he received his juvenile instruction; in what manner he acquitted himself among his fellows in his earlier years—all these are matters about which the imagination may create its pictures, but of which we can really *know* nothing. He may have done his best to follow the swiftest in the chase among those hills and glens which still encompass the site of the old home of his fathers; he may have plunged, in the summer season, into the waters which flowed then, as they flow now, beneath the outlook from his birth-place; or in a more thoughtful mood, he may have rambled under the shadow of the lofty elms which spread themselves eastward from the mansion, far along the hill-top, and may have listened there, as we have ourselves listened, to the chorus of the waters beneath, and the rooks above; and may have given freedom there, not unprofitably, to his young and budding thought upon the ways of men. To ourselves, it was not unpleasant to believe for the moment in such probable or possible things.







Northam Tower.



The next manor to that of the Wycliffes, was the manor of the Rokebys—the region to which the genius of poetry has given such chivalrous celebrity in our time.<sup>1</sup> That domain of modern romance is bounded by the Greta and the Tees, the rivers verging towards each other, as from the points of an angle, until they meet at the foot of the slope on which stands the famous Mortham Tower, and where the two streams become one, amidst scenery that would seem to have put on its best bravery to do honour to their nuptials.

In that tower, as in the Wycliff church, we see one of those home-objects that were familiar to the eye of young Wycliffe, and which amidst the labours and cares of his after-life, no doubt, had often come back to the eye of his imagination, bringing with them some touching memories. We can readily believe too, that the spot where the waters of the Greta floated on, now rushing between, and now bounding over their rocky way, and joined themselves to the broader and more tranquil current of the Tees—like the meeting of youth and age—was a favorite spot to young Wycliffe, and to all like him

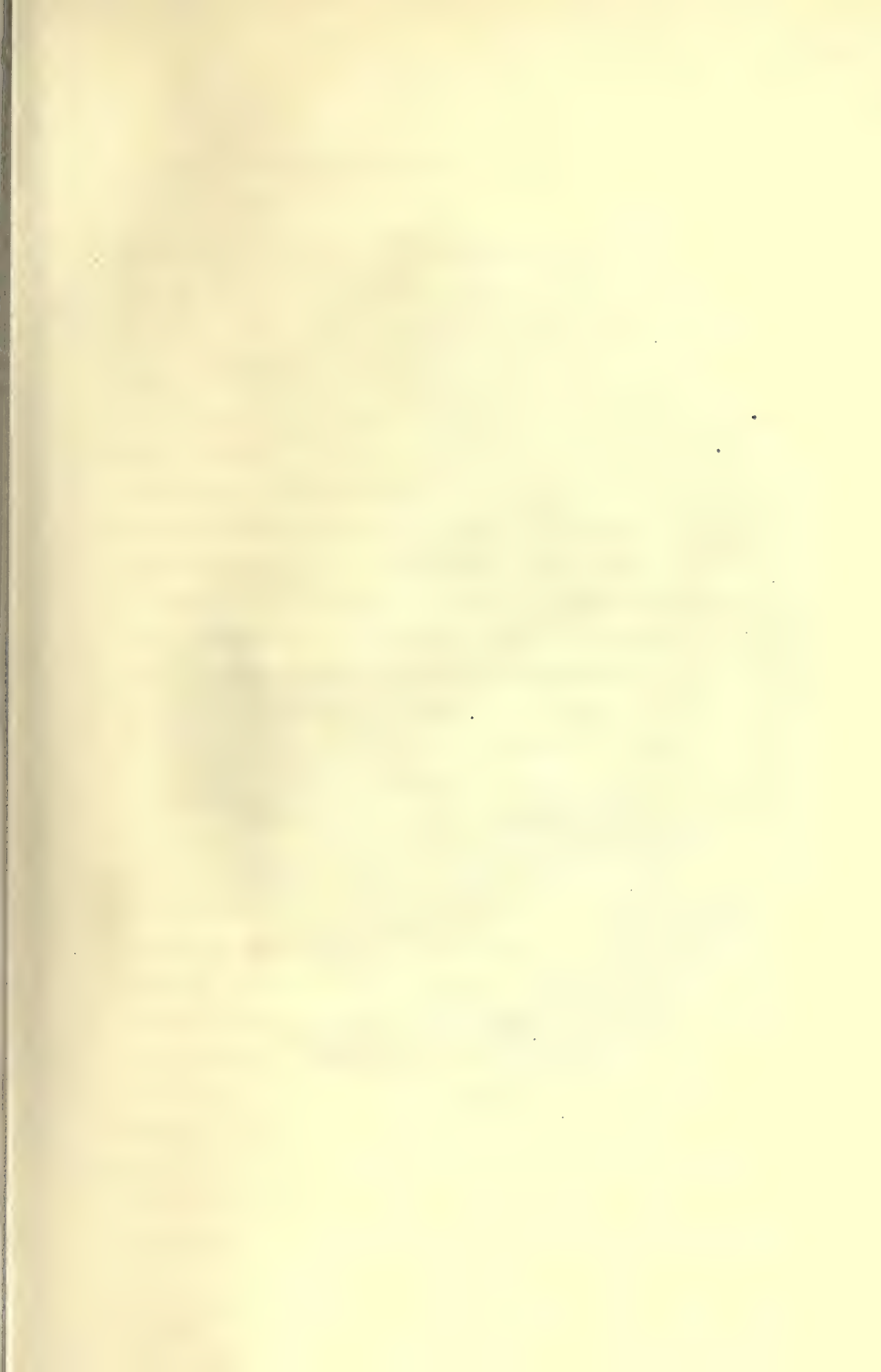
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<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Scott's Rokeby. On our visit to Rokeby, we learnt that Sir Walter, during his stay there was an early riser; that he went early and alone in search of the peasantry of the neighbourhood; and that partly by his gratuities, and still more by his colloquial good nature, he contrived to extract from peasantry and others the entire budget of such traditionary tales as the superstition of the district had contributed to originate or preserve.

thereabouts. There, as we fancy, he might be seen in those remote days, clambering from rock to rock, between the gushing torrents, that, seated as in their midst, he might watch them thus nearly, as with their life-like force they fling themselves along, and almost seem to be of them as he listened thus closely to their many-noted chorus. The romance of this district as given by Sir Walter, was not its romance as in the mind of Wycliffe; but to him, we may be sure, more than to us moderns, such scenes were allied with stories of strange deeds and strange sights, the natural being mixed up largely with the supernatural.

Contiguous to Rokeby, in the opposite direction, the direction yet further from Wycliffe, is Egglestone Abbey, which, in the fourteenth century, was in its prosperity, and a foundation of the sort in which youth commonly received education, especially such as were looking to the vows of priesthood. Such places of instruction were to be found at no great distance from each other over the whole land, especially over the northern countries; those countries being so far removed from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Edward the first brings it as a heavy charge against the Scots, that they had extended their violence to a religious house of this description, in one of the northern districts, where as many as two hundred 'young clerks' were receiving their education. From diligent research on this subject, it appears, that during the interval from the conquest to the time of king John, more than five hundred religious houses had







Junction of the Greta and the Tees.



made their appearance in England ; and it is well known that to these houses schools were generally annexed.<sup>1</sup> The time had come, moreover, *even before* the age of Wycliffe, in which education ceased to be confined to religious houses, or to clerical persons.

Matthew Paris relates, that beside the conventual school in the Abbey of St. Alban's, in which every branch of knowledge then cultivated was taught, there was another in the town, under one Matthew, a physician, and Garinus, his kinsman : and the praise bestowed on this secular or laic school, by our monkish author, implies that there were many such in England in his time. Indeed, we have evidence, that so early as 1138, schools of this nature, distinct from monastic establishments, had made their way from large towns into villages. But no man could become a schoolmaster without a license from a clerk, and the exactions made from such persons by the clergy, whether from jealousy or avarice, were such as to provoke heavy censure, sometimes from the civil power, and sometimes from church councils.<sup>2</sup>

The juvenile studies of young Wycliffe may have devolved on some domestic priest ; or, it may be, that the walls yet standing at Egglestone Abbey, are the walls

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<sup>1</sup> Tanner. *Notitia Monastica*. Preface.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Paris, *Vit. Abbot.* p. 62. *Brompton Chron.* 1348. Hovedon, 589. Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, Pref. Henry's *Hist. of England*, VI. 162—169. Dupin. *Eccles. Hist. Cent. XIII.* p. 92.

which once gave back the sound of his voice, and that in the hill-side road from Egglestone to Wycliffe, we see the space over which the future Reformer exercised himself as a daily' pedestrian, during the 'satchel' period of his history. If so, the loneliness and beauty of that road, if felt only slightly or passively by the boy, would be often revisited in imagination by the man, as the dreams of the morning of life, in his case as in the case of all, gave place to its strange realities. The grass-grown floor of the roofless abbey is now turned to very mean uses. When there, we saw swine taking their meal from a trough, which rested on a blue slab-stone, presenting, in half-worn relief, one of the abbots of Egglestone, with features, costume, crosier—all exposed to such indignity. So cometh change over all things human !

In those days, Oxford, or 'Oxenforde' as it was often called, received its pupils at a very tender age. Boys rather than men, appeared to have formed the majority of the students. But such as came from places so remote as the north-riding of Yorkshire, would be, in general, of a more advanced age. The slowness, the labour, the cost, and, we may add, the peril of travel, in the age of Wycliffe, were such as to render it in the greatest degree improbable that he would leave his native place earlier than in his sixteenth year. We have become what we are as to the power of locomotion, by very slow degrees. The author of 'Waverly,' when writing of only 'sixty



years since,' describes the 'Fly-coach' as aiming at something wonderful, when promising to convey its passengers from Edingbro' to London, 'God willing, in three weeks.' But if we go back another century, we may see William and Mary three months on the English throne, before the news of the abdication of James the Second has found its way to the Orkneys. In the fourteenth century, many days would pass before the death of a monarch would become known much beyond the place of the event; and many weeks would elapse, before the news would spread itself to the distant parts of the kingdom. Some months, we are told, intervened, after the massacre of the Jews in London, in the time of Richard the First, before that deed became known in York or Norwich.

In that age, the mode of travelling for men, was on horseback. Carriages were used only by ladies of high rank, or by the sick; and few were the roads on which wheels could be used at all, especially in winter. The carriage of goods—even of coals from Newcastle, and of potteries from Staffordshire—was almost entirely by the pack-horse; and traffickers in this fashion, for their better safety and better cheer, often travelled, after the oriental manner, in large companies; the scattered inns, or the hospitable monasteries, serving as caravanseras. Our many inns in old villages and small towns, with the sign of the pack-horse upon them, remind us, in a measure, even at this day, of that by-gone custom. The reader will remember that the figures he has seen in engravings

of the famous 'Pilgrimage to Canterbury,' are all equestrian ; and the horse was deemed strong of foot, that would perform the journey from London to the shrine of Thomas A'Becket in two days.<sup>1</sup> The mother of Richard the Second, indeed, accomplished a journey from Canterbury to London in one day ; but she was a queen dowager, and fled as for her life, that she might escape the hands of the insurgents under Wat Tyler. Even in such circumstances, the achievement was talked about as being almost a miracle. In 1381, a king's herald, with every advantage of safe conduct and equipment, was not expected to perform the journey from London to Berwick in less than forty days. At that time it was the fate of many a good palfrey to be smothered in the bog, drowned in the ford, or to sink and expire in the midst of the slough, leaving his rider to make his way a-foot, as he

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<sup>1</sup> ' The roads throughout the country in the fourteenth century, ' appear to have been kept in some sort of order by the respective ' townships ; and for the support of the few bridges then in existence, ' a duty called pontage was levied, which fell heaviest upon the Agri- ' culturists and the Merchants, as most of the clergy and their peasants ' were exempt from pontage and other tolls of a like description. It ' does not appear, however, that any compulsory labour, like the ' French *corvée*, was in force in England for the repair of the roads ' and bridges. When the great north road into London, which in ' this century passed through Gray's Inn Lane, was found to be nearly ' impassable from ruts and mud, the citizens of London were autho- ' rized to levy a toll upon the traffic along it, to pay the expense of ' restoring the highway ; and such appears to have been the system ' generally adopted in other parts of the kingdom.'—Hudson Turner's *Domestic Architecture in England*, c. III.



best might, to the nearest town, to purchase or hire another quadruped for his journey.

The public thoroughfares, both to London and Paris, were without pavement, and more like the bye-lanes of an obscure village, than the high-ways to a great capital. Every sort of filth and offal was thrown into the street ; and the right to turn swine into any thoroughfare during the greater part of the day, to assist the ravenous birds in consuming what they might find there, was asserted with much stoutness and obstinacy by civil, and even by ecclesiastical corporations. Even so late as the reign of Henry the Eighth, the streets of our metropolis are described as being many of them ‘very foul, and full of ‘pits and sloughs, very perilous, as well for the king’s ‘subjects on horseback, as on foot.’

The structure of the houses too, each story projecting over its lower one, until the upper chamber almost touched the upper one of its opposite neighbour, gave to nearly all the avenues of the metropolis an appearance, which, in our eyes, would resemble tunnels rather than streets, leaving but a narrow and irregular line of opening at the top for the admission of either light or air from above. Through such narrow inlets neither moon nor stars could send much of their illumination ; and the only artificial light supplied at the public cost, consisted of a huge dim lamp fixed above the tower of Bow church ! If so it was in London, even so late as the time of Henry the Eighth, we can imagine how it fared with the

townspeople through the provinces, nearly two centuries earlier.

Beside the hindrances, and something more, from bad roads, there were the dangers, common to nearly the whole country, from ferocious animals, and from marauding men. Wolves, wild boars, and bulls as little tamed as they, often fronted the solitary traveller, and scared him from his path. Even such as travelled in companies were not secure against obstruction and danger from these causes. Outlaws and vagabonds, whose numbers the rudeness and oppression of the times always tended to replenish, infested the public roads, plundered the way-farers, sometimes putting them to death, at others detaining them prisoners, either to sell them as bondsmen, or to convey them to their forest or mountain-fastnesses, until ransomed at a great price. It was not always from a fondness for mere equipage, accordingly, that opulent ecclesiastics were careful, when they went abroad, to go attended by a strong military retinue.

The forests abounding in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries contributed much to foster and perpetuate this inconvenience and danger of travel. In 1250, the forests and woods, directly or indirectly under the controul of the crown, amounted to more than seventy. Beyond these were the many woodlands, some of them of large extent, belonging to private persons. Every county in England included one or more of these woods or forests. They abounded in game, which in those



times gave them a large portion of their value in the eyes of their owners. At the close of the reign of Henry the Third there were wild cattle in the wood of Osterly, in Middlesex, the owner then, as in later times, being a London citizen. Roads passing through these woods were infested, as we have said, by bands of lawless men, runaway villains, and persons of a like description, who lived by plunder. About the middle of the thirteenth century, the Abbots of St. Alban's retained certain armed men to protect the road between that town and the metropolis, which lay for the most part through woods. The great high-roads of the kingdom, as they followed mostly the direction of the old Roman ways, the Athelinge or Watling street, and others, passed of necessity in many places through the midst of these forests, as did the high-ways which connected one market-town with another. It was not, however, until the year 1285 that stringent measures were adopted to protect travellers and traffic against the insecurity arising from this cause. It was then enacted by statute, that the highways leading from one market-town to another should be widened, so that there might be no bushes, trees, or dikes within two hundred feet on each side of the road, all proprietors neglecting this injunction, being held responsible for the felonies that might be facilitated by such negligence. Matthew Paris relates the punishment inflicted, in the early part of this century, on certain retainers of the court of Henry the Third for robbing traders on their way

to the great fair at Winchester. Hampshire, indeed, was notorious for its bands of free-booters. The legate Pundulf, in the reign of John, complained to the bishop of Winchester, 'that no one could travel through the neighbourhood of Winchester, without being captured or robbed; and that even robbery was not sufficient, but that people were slain.' The wooded pass of Alton, on the borders of Surrey and Hampshire, was a favourite ambush for outlaws, who there awaited the merchants, and their trains of sumpter-horses, travelling to or from Winchester. Even in the fourteenth century, the warders of the great fair of St. Giles's, held in that city, paid five mounted sergeants-at-arms to keep the pass of Alton during the continuance of the fair, 'according to custom.' As will be supposed, the plunderers who infested roads, frequently assailed houses, and houses, accordingly, when at all of the better class, were constructed as much with a view to defence as to comfort. While danger came in some quarters from the forest, in others it came from the fen and the morass. The monks of Ely and Croyland did something towards abating this grievance in what were called the fen countries, by encouraging drainage and tillage; but the evil was too gigantic to admit of being more than slightly diminished by their influence.<sup>1</sup>

From all these causes, meetings between the members of families separated from each other, were very rare.

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<sup>1</sup> Hudson Turner's *Domestic Architecture of England*, c. III.



The absence of such happy gatherings, moreover, was made the more painful by the difficulties of written communication. Few among the middle classes, or even among those high above them, could write; and the use of another hand for such a purpose, was fatal to nearly all that gives nature and charm to letters. The half would be sure to be untold, and commonly the half-untold would be that which lay nearest the heart of the writer.

Even those who possessed the clerkly accomplishment of being able to write, found themselves dependant on such persons as trafficked at fairs, or such as did religious pilgrimage, for the conveyance of any expression of care and affection in that form from one loving heart to another. Heavy sums were often paid for the conveyance of letters even to short distances. The following letter by Mrs. Paston, written a century subsequent to the age of Wycliffe, presents a touching picture of the severance and loneliness to which hearts closely bound to each other were often subject in those olden times. ‘Right  
‘well beloved brother. I commend me to you, letting  
‘you wete that I am in welfare. I marvel sore that ye  
‘never sent writing to me since ye departed: I heard  
‘never since that time word out of Norfolk. Ye might at  
‘Bartholomew fair have had messengers enough to Lon-  
‘don, and if ye had sent to Wykes, he should have conveyed  
‘it to me. I heard yesterday that a worsted man of Nor-  
‘folk, that sold worsted at Winchester, said that my Lord  
‘of Norfolk and my Lady, were on pilgrimage to our

‘ Lady, on foot, and so they went to Caister : and that at  
‘ Norwich, one should have had large language with you,  
‘ and called you traitor, and picked many quarrels with  
‘ you : send me word thereof. I pray you send me word  
‘ if any of our friends be dead, for I fear there is a great  
‘ death in Norwich, and in the other towns in Norfolk, for  
‘ I assure you that it is a most universal death that ever  
‘ I wist in England, for by my troth I cannot hear by pil-  
‘ grims that pass the country, nor none other man that  
‘ rideth or goeth about, that any borough town in England  
‘ is free from sickness.’<sup>1</sup> Thus, the great agencies and  
news-vendings of those days, were performed by the  
people who went to ‘ Bartholomew Fair : ’—by the ‘ worsted  
man ’ who sold worsted at Winchester :—by the ‘ pil-  
grims that pass the country ; ’ and, in short, by any ‘ man  
that rideth or goeth about.’ What is more, if the care-  
worn and sorrow-stricken always felt the tidings so con-  
veyed to have been long in coming, the common news so  
brought was often little trustworthy when it did come.  
Nearly everything depended upon hearsay, and the tidings  
which filled a whole district with joy or sadness in one  
week, might prove many weeks later to have been mere  
rumour, without truth in particle or semblance.

These facts, affecting so intimately all social inter-  
course, are so far touched upon in this place, because

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<sup>1</sup> Paston Letters. Merryweather’s Lights and Shadows of the Olden Times, 56, 57.



they assist us to judge of the difficulty that must in such times have been in the way of reform and progress of any description. Great changes must come from joint action, and we here see the impediments which lay in the path of the communication necessary to such action. The marvel is not that the labours of Wycliffe failed to issue in such a reformation as took place in some of the states of Europe nearly two centuries later ; but rather that in spite of such disadvantages in respect to means of intercourse, to say nothing of the absence of printing, his solitary energy was found capable of achieving so much.

How Wycliffe accomplished the formidable journey from his quiet home to Oxford we do not know. His journal of that achievement, if our young scholar kept one, would be pleasant reading. But in the absence of such assistance, the facts stated are important as suggesting much in respect to the social condition of the people of this country, in the age assigned by providence to the labours of our reformer ; and as warranting the conclusion that Wycliffe must have been verging towards manhood, when about to remove to so great a distance from all domestic oversight. It should be stated, moreover, that we have not the smallest reason to suppose that Wycliffe ever visited the place of his birth after once leaving it ; while, on the other hand, we have sufficient evidence in his writings, of his having remained in that locality long enough to have adopted some of its peculiarities of dialect so thoroughly, as never to have unlearned them.



## CHAPTER II.

### WYCLIFFE IN OXFORD.



QUEEN'S College, Oxford, was founded in 1340, and among the names of those who entered it in that year we find the name of John de Wycliffe. The testimony of history to this name as being that of our reformer is unquestioned and decisive. This college owed its origin in part to the munificence of Phillippa, queen of Edward the third ; but still more to the generosity of Sir Robert Eglesfield, one of her majesty's chaplains. This clergyman was a native of Cumberland, and the college instituted under his influence, was designed chiefly for the benefit of students from the northern counties. We are not prepared to say that it was this fact that determined our young 'freshman' in the choice made of his place of study. But it should be remembered that the '*nations*,' as they were called in that age,—that is, the students, who, as



in Paris or Oxford, were bound to each other by the ties of a native language, or of a native territory or province, did congregate very much together, formed themselves into distinct organizations, and that these organizations often acted with so much spirit, in relation to matters regarded as affecting their common interests, as to be brought very frequently into harsh collisions,—collisions sometimes between nation and nation, and sometimes between one or more of the nations and the authorities above them. We should not be surprized if it could be made to appear, that all the men who entered Queen's in 1340, were from our northern counties. Nor is it by any means improbable that the relation of Wycliffe to Balliol, sometime later, resulted in part from the fact that Balliol College, founded not more than seventy years before, owed its origin to a family living in near neighbourhood to his birth-place—viz., to the Balliols of Bernard Castle.<sup>1</sup>

However this may have been, we may be quite sure

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<sup>1</sup> Wood's Hist. Oxen. Huber's English Universities, I. 193. Each separate College in Oxford and Cambridge, says Huber, has its history; of which, however, the over-wisdom of modern times has scarcely left us any trace. Among the stories preserved, was one concerning a scholar of Queen's College, Oxford; who, being attacked during a solitary walk by a wild boar, thrust his Aristotle down the animal's throat, and returned home in triumph with the animal's head. For this reason the boar's-head played a prominent part in the Christmas festivals of this college.—Ibid. It would have been well if Aristotle had never been applied to a less useful purpose. The festivities in honor of this achievement lasted until Anthony Wood's time—what the usage of Queen's has been in times more recent, we know not.

that the building which received the students of Queen's College in 1340, was something very different from the edifice which bears that name in modern Oxford. The lofty gateway, and the spacious quadrangle of Queen's which now attract the attention of the visitor, as he ascends the high street of that beautiful city, entered not into the dreams of the men who were the first to prosecute their studies on that foundation. In nearly all respects, the Oxford of 1340 bore small resemblance to the Oxford which we have seen—scarcely more than the London of that time may be supposed to have borne to the London that now is. In respect to mere space, indeed, the difference between ancient and modern Oxford may not be considerable. For so early as the time of the Conqueror, Oxford included more than seven hundred houses, which gave it a high place in third class towns, if not with towns of the second class. It is said, that subsequently to the Conquest, much the greater part of these houses were unoccupied. Our own interpretation of this statement would be, that the houses so reported were those occupied by students, as distinct from those occupied by the townspeople ; and that this vacancy was restricted to the interval of Terms. For here two things are certain,—first, that it was a peculiarity in the history of the University of Oxford, as distinguished from the University of Paris, that, as a rule, its students were lodged and boarded in edifices separated to that purpose, instead of being dispersed in the houses of the towns-

people ; and second, that during more than two centuries after the Conquest, the buildings so appropriated continued to be—with very little, if any, exception—buildings rented for such uses. This was the case even with Colleges, still more with the Inns and Halls, which preceded them, and which, except as being subject to the presidency of a licensed, or otherwise authorized teacher, were simply so many self-sustained and voluntary schools.

But if the Oxford of the middle-age may bear some comparison with the Oxford of later times as to the *quantity* of its buildings, the comparison must not be extended to the *quality* of them. During the space from the consolidation of the Universities—if we may so speak—in the thirteenth century, to the times of the Reformation, complaints as to the poverty of those establishments, as compared with the foundations of the religious orders, are frequent and doleful : and the presumption is, that could we look at Oxford as it presented itself to the sight of young Wycliffe, when he first entered it, we should see not a little in some of its aspects to shock our refinement, and to rob our retrospect in that field of the imagination of not a little of its poetry. The spot was valued as the seat of a University, partly from its central position in relation to the kingdom at large ; partly from its security, by means of water in one direction, and by means of its strong fortifications, which frowned defiance towards a flat and open country, upon the other ; partly, too, from its not being so near the seat of any episcopal



influence, as to be curbed and injured by it, in the manner experienced in nearly all the Cathedral and Conventual schools—and, above all, from the historical fame which had given to the place so many associations agreeable to the scholar and the man of taste.

Strong, assuredly, was the sympathy arising in those dark ages from such associations—deep the passion awakened by them, in favour of a life of study. Youth and manhood, in the case of thousands, submitted under such impulses to privations which our own indulgent habits may well preclude us from suspecting, almost from believing. The expression, ‘poor scholar,’ was among the most familiar phrases of that time. Nearly all the learned foundations of that age, had more or less of an express reference to the persons so described. Chaucer has given us the man who was present to his imagination, as the representative of the class comprehended under that description.

He is a person famed for his logic, but he finds his logic a somewhat sorry thing to live upon, in the vulgar sense of living. The horse he rides is as lean as ‘is a rake,’ and he is himself the image of that leanness. His cheek is hollow, and his coat is thread-bare. Still he covets not any worldly office. His bedroom is his study; and his pleasure in having over ‘his bed’s-head,’ some ‘twenty books clothed in black or red,’ is greater than he would find in rich costumes, in pompous ceremonials, or in festive meetings. He is a philosopher, he does

daily worship to Aristotle ; but his philosophy is not of a sort to bring gold to his coffers. Whatever of good coin falls to his lot, goes in books ; and heartily does he pray for the souls of those who help him in that manner. You hear him speak but as there is need to speak, and then he so does with due form and reverence. His words are few, soon uttered, full of meaning, breathing virtue. His only thought of life is, as of a space in which a man should be ever learning, or ever teaching.<sup>1</sup>

It is not said by our great poet of manners, that all Oxford scholars were strictly of this mood. He has himself given us sketches of professed students of another temperament. His ' parish clerk ' named Absolon, may be taken as one sample of a different class. This gay gentleman curled his hair, and so dressed it, that it shone like gold, and floated abroad like an open fan. His surplice was white as the blossom of the hawthorn ; and his kirtle, of rich Watchet cloth, was set thickly and gaily with points. His hose were of a brilliant red. His shoes had a likeness to the windows of St. Paul's imprinted on them.

A merry child he was, so God me save,  
Well could he letten blood, and clip, and shave,  
And make a charter of land, and a quittance,  
In twenty manner could he trip and dance,  
(After the school of Oxenforde through)  
And with his legges casten to and fro ;  
And playen songs on a small ribble,<sup>2</sup>  
Hereto he sung sometimes a loud quible,  
And as well could he play on a gittern.

<sup>1</sup> Chaucer's ' Clerk of Oxenford.'

<sup>2</sup> Musical Instrument.

In every tavern kept by a 'gay tapster,' and in every 'brew-house' of the town, this piece of clerical buffoonery had his acquaintance. But on special occasions he was more than usually vain and sensuous in his tendencies.

This Absolon that jolly was and gay,  
Go'th with a censer on the holiday,  
Censing the wives of the parish fast,  
And many a loveing look he on them caste.

Did Oxford bless the towns of England with many products of this description in the fourteenth century? That it did something considerable in this way we may be sure—our poet would not have been at the pains to sketch this portrait, if his readers had not been likely to see it as true to nature when presented to them. Nevertheless, our 'clerk of Oxenford' was, a type of a large section among the youths of 'the school' there, who studied to much better purpose than this 'parish clerk named Absolon.' Then, as now, Oxford was a place for companionships of all sorts.

But, as we have said, Oxford, during a great part of the middle ages, was the place of many schools for boys, rather than of many colleges for men. Wood speaks of these schools, as 'nurseries for grammarians,' where the young were put under discipline, until capable of ascending to 'higher arts,' and informs us, that Oxford, at one time, included nearly four hundred such seminaries.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Annals, 105—107.



This may be a startling number, but not more startling than that given as the number of the students resident in Oxford in the thirteenth, and in the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. Richard of Armagh, in a sermon preached before the Pope at Avignon, in 1387, says, 'Although there were in the Studium of Oxford, even *'in my time, thirty thousand students,* there are not *'now six thousand.'* Thomas Gascon, also, once Chancellor of Oxford, who died in 1457, has stated in one of his papers, edited by Hearne, 'Thirty thousand scholars *'existed in Oxford before the great plague, as I saw in 'the rolls of the old Chancellors, when I myself was 'Chancellor there.'*<sup>1</sup> Other authorities there are, which vary the numbers from fifteen thousand; to six, five, and even so low as three thousand. The time *'before the great plague,'* was the time preceding the year 1348: and thus the testimonies of Richard of Armagh, and of the Ex-chancellor agree, both as to time, and as to the higher number. If the students, taking in the youngest and the oldest, together with all resident members of the university, and even all immediate attendants on such parties, amounted to thirty thousand, even in that view, the fact of so many persons being brought together in such an age, into one place, purely because it was a place of learning, is a fact of no little significance.<sup>2</sup> Whatever be the difficulties which the general state of

<sup>1</sup> Fox, Acts and Mon. I. 532, 543.    <sup>2</sup> Huber's Engl. Univer. i. 66—68.

society in those ages, may seem to place in the way of our giving credence to such a fact, the authorities relating to it are certainly such as may not be readily set aside. It is agreed, on all hands, however, that during the active period in the life of Wycliffe, the number of students resident in Oxford did not rise to a third of the higher number stated.

We have said that, in the Universities of the middle age, there were separate organizations among the students, according to their respective countries, or the divisions of countries. In the history of the University of Paris, and sometimes in the histories of Oxford and Cambridge, these organizations are designated by the term '*nations*'. But in Oxford, the organized nations were restricted to the *Southernmen* and the *Northernmen*. The Scotch generally coalesced with the Northerns, the Welsh and Irish with the Southernns. It was the recognized privilege of these two divisions, that each should choose its own proctor, from its own body. To each division, its proctor was as a sort of tribune, through whom the nation expressed its opinion, and pleaded its own cause, whether as opposed to its rival nation, or to the powers to which both owed obedience. In the scenes of disorder and violence which arose between these bodies, the Welsh had their full share, but the Irish, as to the manner born, were among the most conspicuous actors on such occasions. The times in which these jealousies and feuds commonly broke forth, were the times of the church-

festivals ; and grave were often the mischiefs that ensued. During the whole of the fourteenth century, but especially during the first half of it, the nations are continually mentioned as taking part in riotous exploits, under the names of Northernmen and Southernmen.<sup>1</sup>

But it is a fact, and one to which it behoves us, from the nature of our subject, to give close attention, that there were other causes, much more rational than those fostered merely by local prejudice, or usage, at the root of such outbursts. The following extract will supply an instance of what might happen in the history of a company of Oxford students a century earlier than the age of Wycliffe. In writing of the year 1238, Matthew Paris, and Thomas de Wyke, say,<sup>2</sup> ‘ About this time the ‘ lord Legate Otho, (who had been sent to England to ‘ remedy multifarious abuses in the church,) came to ‘ Oxford also, where he was received with all becoming ‘ honors. He took up his abode in the Abbey of Osney. ‘ The elders of the University, however, sent him a goodly ‘ present of welcome, of meats, and various drinks, for his ‘ dinner ; and after the hour of the meal, repaired to his ‘ abode, to greet him, and do him honor. Then so it was, ‘ that a certain Italian, a door-keeper of the Legate, with ‘ less perchance of courtesy towards visitors than was becoming, called out to them with loud voice, *after Romish fashion*, and keeping the door ajar, “ What seek ye ? ”

<sup>1</sup> Huber's English Universities, I. 78. *et seq.*    <sup>2</sup> Ibid I. 90—92. Gale. 43.



‘ Whereupon they answered, “the lord Legate, that we  
‘ may greet him.” And they thought within themselves,  
‘ assuredly, that honor would be requited by honor. But  
‘ when the door-keeper, with violent and unseemly words,  
‘ refused them entrance, they pressed their force into the  
‘ house, regardless of the clubs and fists of the *Romans*,  
‘ who sought to keep them back. Now it came to pass  
‘ also, that during this tumult, a certain poor *Irish* clerk  
‘ went to the door of the kitchen, and begged earnestly,  
‘ for God’s sake, as a hungry and needy man, that they  
‘ would give him a portion of the good things. The  
‘ master-cook, however, (the Legate’s own brother, it is  
‘ said, who filled this office for the fear of poison,) drove  
‘ him back with hard words, and at last, in great wrath,  
‘ flung hot broth out of a pot into his face ! “Fie, for  
‘ shame,” cries a scholar from *Welshland*, who witnessed  
‘ the affront, “shall we bear this ?” And then bending  
‘ a bow which he held in his hand, (for during the tur-  
‘ moil, some had laid hands upon such weapons as they  
‘ found within reach,) he shot the cook, whom the scholars  
‘ in derision, named Nebuzaradan, the Prince of Cooks,  
‘ with a bolt through the body, so that he fell dead to  
‘ the earth. Then was raised a loud cry : and the Legate  
‘ himself, in great fear, disguised in the garment of a  
‘ canonist, fled into the tower of the church, and shut to  
‘ the gates. And there remained he hidden until night ;  
‘ only when the tumult was quite laid, he came forth,  
‘ mounted a horse, and hastened through bye-ways,

‘and not without danger, led by trusty guides, to the spot where the king held his court, and there sought protection. The enraged scholars, however, stayed not for a great length of time seeking the Legate, with loud cries, in all the corners of the house, saying, *Where is the usurer, the simonist, the plunderer of our goods, who thirsts after our gold and silver, who leads the king astray, and, upsetting the kingdom, enriches strangers with our spoils.*’

Our readers will observe the parts in this little drama which fell to the lot of the Hibernian and the Welshman. Very characteristic—are they not? Furthermore, in the language of the students, as they rush through the apartments of the Abbey in search of the legate, we no doubt have the utterance of the popular opinion in relation to such personages and their doings—as men who would be sure to lead kings ‘astray,’ and to enrich Italian knaves with ‘spoils’ taken from honest Englishmen.

In explanation of this proceeding, it should be remembered, that at that time, about twice seven years had passed since the barons had wrung the Great Charter from the hands of King John. Fifty years later, moreover, the descendants of those same barons, with Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, at their head, gave to England its first House of Commons. It was in Oxford that this nobleman assembled the parliament of 1258, which drew up articles to be submitted to the King, the rejection of which by the monarch led to a civil war.

Two years later, a large body of the students, who had taken part with the barons, migrated to Northampton, and defended that place against the king with so much science and stoutness, that it was with difficulty that Henry the Third, on taking the town, was dissuaded from his purpose of putting them all to death.

From the commencement of this struggle, the whole country was divided into two parties—the party of the king, and the party of the barons. Nor is it too much to say, that our much later divisions as a people into Parliamentary and Royalist, Whig and Tory, Liberal and Conservative, may be traced up to the conflict in which the nation was then engaged. The crown, especially in the time of John, and of Henry the Third, naturally found its most powerful ally, and, as often, its subtle master, in the papacy; while its soldiers were, as to far the greater part, mercenaries,—and the men most at its bidding in other departments, both in Church and State, were rapacious foreigners. With the barons' party, on the other hand, were all the towns, and nearly the whole Saxon population, especially the 'northern men.'

With party feeling thus rife everywhere, it is easy to imagine the ardour with which the young spirits at Oxford would commit themselves to the one side or the other. The king, in the eyes of the popular party, represented the power which menaced the freedom of their persons and property; while the aim of the Pope, and of his sordid emissaries, was to leave them as little



liberty in things spiritual, as the crown was disposed to leave to them in things temporal. Simon de Montfort, on the contrary, was lauded as hero, saint, and martyr,—as the man who had shown more bravery than his fellows in behalf both of the civil and religious immunities of the English people. In those times, as in later times, the virtues may not have been all on one side; but to the champions of popular principle in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we are indebted for the progress of our free constitution, hardly less than to our patriots and puritans in the days of the Stuarts. The germ of all the securities insisted on by our Cokes and Hampdens, our Russells and Sidneys, had been so thoroughly sown in the national thinking, and in the national heart, even in that remote time, that the striving of the popular leaders in the Long Parliament—as their history abundantly shows,—was not so much for new theories, as for the free exposition and the faithful administration of old laws. We shall find evidence enough as we proceed, of the fervent sympathy of Wycliffe with the principles and feelings of this great national party.

Wycliffe, as we have seen, entered Queen's College in 1340. He entered that College as a Commoner; but removed after a short interval to Merton, where he was first Probationer, and afterwards Fellow.<sup>1</sup> This College

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<sup>1</sup> The records of Merton show him to have performed the duties of Seneschal in January of the year 1356. *Compositus Ric. Billingham*,

was founded in 1264, by Walter de Merton, Chancellor of England, under Henry the Third. It was located in a house which had been the property of the Abbey of Reading. The documents relating to this foundation, drawn up by the Chancellor himself, show him to have been a man of judgment, fully alive to the wants of the time. The establishment was enlarged both in 1270 and 1274, and in the latter year it seems that certain scholars who had been pursuing their studies under the patronage of the Chancellor at Malden in Surrey, removed to Oxford. The yearly income of the Fellows was fifty shillings, and the Archbishop of Canterbury was empowered to choose one from their number to fill the office of Warden. Merton rose suddenly into great celebrity. It took precedence of all the other Colleges, with the exception of University College, in respect to date; became, from its success, a model to all that followed, and it long retained its pre-eminence. Before the time of Wycliffe's admission to this College, a considerable number of its men had become eminent in their day in natural science; and from among its clerical students, one had risen to be preceptor to Edward the Third, and three to be Primates of the English Church. It was in Merton, also, that Ockham, the great school-man, designated the *venerable inceptor*, began his career; and it was here that Bradwardine,

named the *profound*, delivered lectures on Theology. The fame of Occham was European in his own life-time, and that of Bradwardine has survived in his admirable writings to our own day.<sup>1</sup> The position, accordingly, attained by Wycliffe, while still a young man, as Fellow of Merton, may be taken as evidence of the manner in which he spent his earlier years at Oxford. No status in the University, we presume, could have given better evidence of industry, or of sound learning—according to the estimate of learning in those times.

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<sup>1</sup> Huber I. 190, 191. The chief work of Bradwardine is intitled *De Causa Dei, &c.*—and shows how the doctrines since known by the name of Calvinism, were expounded and vindicated in the middle ages. The reader may obtain a sufficient knowledge of the work from the account given of it in Milner's Church History.





### CHAPTER III.

#### WYCLIFFE AS MASTER OF BALLIOL AND WARDEN OF CANTERBURY HALL.

**O**F Wycliffe in Oxford, we are left to judge, for the most part, from what we learn gradually concerning him as Wycliffe the Reformer. In this stage of his history the first point demanding our attention relates to the authorship of a Tract attributed to Wycliffe, intitled 'the Last Age of the Church.'

In a volume of manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, there is a Tract under the above title. The volume containing it was presented, with many other manuscripts, once the property of Archbishop Ussher, to Trinity College Library by Charles II. Before I had access to that volume, now some five-and-twenty years since, I was aware that the following entry had been made on the upper margin of the first page, 'Anno

1368, Wicklif's workes to the Duk of Lancaster.' Great was my curiosity to learn what the subsequent pages of a volume so described would be found to contain. For on this point, no man had hitherto furnished the public with the slightest information. Mr. Lewis had mentioned this superscription as being on the volume, but contented himself with the briefest possible account of one of the pieces included in it. When the volume came under my inspection, I was assured by one learned authority, that this heading was in the hand of Archbishop Ussher; by another, it has been since said to be in the hand of Sir Robert Cotton. But, whoever wrote the superscription, I was truly sorry to find that the contents of the volume were not such as to lend any sanction to the statement that these treatises had been dedicated to the Duke of Lancaster; nor in fact anything to warrant the prefixing of the date—Anno, 1368, to the collection of writings of which it consists. There is, indeed, an almost illegible entry of this date by another hand on this first page: but it is certain that in following this authority, the person who made the subsequent entry had committed himself to a treacherous guide. We speak thus positively, because we shall give proof, in its place, that several of the pieces included in this collection supply internal evidence of having been written subsequently to 1368.

But with regard to the tract in this volume, intituled—*'The Last Age of the Church,'* it is beyond doubt, that this must have been written so early as 1356, the year

‘thirteen hundred and six-and-fifty,’ being mentioned by the author as the year in which he is writing. If it be from the pen of Wycliffe, it must, accordingly, have been written by him when comparatively a young man—somewhere about thirty years of age. Inasmuch as it had been attributed to Wycliffe, without any doubt, by the most trustworthy authorities who had gone before me in these inquiries, and inasmuch as the early date of the document gave it a place and an interest of its own, as compared with all the known writings of the reformer, I must own that I was by no means disposed to be sceptical on the point of its supposed authorship. But as the result of farther investigation, I feel bound to say that I have now strong doubt on this point.

The internal evidence from the tract, is, in my judgment, much more against, than in favour of, the opinion of its being written by Wycliffe. Its complaints against the ecclesiastical abuses, and the general corruptness of the times, are such as might have proceeded from many a recluse or visionary in that age, without exposing him to much inconvenience. On the other hand, the style has nothing of the freedom or the fervour observable in the accredited writings of the reformer. There is nothing in the tame, obscure, and mystic utterances of this tract, to suggest that the writer would ere long become a leading spirit of the age. The attempt, running through it, to make the letters of the Hebrew language prophetically significant of the history of the world during the



times of the Old Testament ; and to make the letters of the Roman alphabet significant, in the same manner, of the history of the church since the coming of Christ, betrays a weakness of judgment little to be expected in a man whose acuteness and mental power were so freely acknowledged by his contemporaries—even by those most hostile to him. Certainly, his writings which are best known and best authenticated, present nothing like it. It is true, we find this treatise bound up with many others, all of which are supposed to be productions of Wycliffe : and there is evidence from history in relation to some of these pieces, and internal evidence in the case of others, which place their authorship beyond doubt. But we would not vouch for the authorship of every piece in this collection. It should be remembered, that in the middle age, manuscripts and tracts, unlike printed publications among ourselves, very rarely gave either the name of the author, or the date of the authorship ; and that we now often find them bound together very much as we bind pamphlets, sometimes by sorting them according to authorship or subjects, sometimes by doing this only partially, and sometimes by putting them into volumes simply for convenience, without sorting them at all, except as to size. The fact, accordingly, that the piece intitled, ' the Last Age of the Church,' is found in a volume including treatises which are certainly by Wycliffe, is by no means decisive evidence in respect to its authorship. We may add, that

while the references to Bede and Bernard may have proceeded naturally enough from Wycliffe, we feel that we pass to more doubtful ground when we find the author placing faith in such a visionary as the Abbot Joachim, and thus taking his religious light from the Beguin enthusiasts of the continent. For it is a remarkable fact, that the writings of Wycliffe never give us any reason to suppose that he was acquainted in any degree with the history of the Waldenses, the Albigenses, or with any of the continental sects. He does not appear to have been aware that these had preceded him in delivering a protest in some respects like his own, against the ecclesiastical corruption of the times.

Our criticism on this little treatise, has been the more necessary, inasmuch as it has been recently printed, and with an array of learned notes, greatly over-stepping the narrow margin of the text. If we give a passage from it, rendered somewhat more readable by correcting the obsolete spelling, we shall perhaps best shew that our doubts have not come upon us without reason. The burden of the author is, that the corruptness of priests and people is about to bring upon them signal retributions. ‘ Alas ! for sorrow, great priests sitting in darkness, and in shadow of death, naught heeding him that  
‘ openly crieth, All this I will give thee, if thou avaunce  
‘ me. They make reservations, the which be called dymes,  
‘ first-fruits, or pensions, after the opinion of them that  
‘ treat this matter. For no more should fat benefices be

' reserved, than small, if no privy cause of simony were  
' tretide, (in treaty, arranged for,) the which, I say  
' naught at this time. But Joachim, in his book of the  
' Seeds of the Prophets, and of the sayings of Popes, and  
' of the charges of Prophets, treating this matter, and  
' speaking of the rent of dymes, saith thus :—four tribu-  
' lations David the prophet hath before said,—the seventy  
' and nine chapter—to enter into the church of God ;  
' and Bernard accordeth therewith, upon Canticles, the  
' three and thirty sermon, that be a nightly dread, an  
' arrow flying in day, chaffare, (pestilence) walking in  
' darkness, and midday devilry—that is to say Antichrist.  
' Nightly dread was, when all that slown (destroyed)  
' saints deemed himself do service to God, and this was  
' the first tribulation that entered the church of God.  
' The arrow flying in day was deceit of heretics, and that  
' was the second tribulation that entered the church of  
' Christ. That is put off by wisdom of saints, as the  
' first was cast out by stedfastness of martyrs. Chaffare  
' (pestilence) walking in darkness is the privy heresy of  
' Simonists, by reason of which the third tribulation shall  
' enter into Christ's church, the which tribulation or  
' anguish shall enter the church of Christ in the time of  
' the hundredth year of 'x' letter, whose end we be, as  
' I will prove, and this mischief shall be so heavy that  
' well shall be to that man of holy church that then shall  
' not be alive. And that I prove thus, by Joachim in  
' his book of the Seeds of Prophets. Men of Hebrew



‘ tongue have xxii. letters, and beginning from the first  
‘ of Hebrew letters, and giving to every letter a hundred  
‘ years, the Old Testament was ended when the number  
‘ given to the letters was fulfilled. So from the be-  
‘ ginning of Hebrew letters unto Christ, in the which  
‘ the Old Testament was ended, were two and twenty  
‘ hundred of years, this also (he) showeth openly by  
‘ description of time, of Eusebius, Bede, and Haymound,  
‘ most approved of authors or talkers. So Christian men  
‘ have xxi. letters, and beginning from the first of Latin  
‘ letters, and giving to each a hundred, the New Testa-  
‘ ment was ended where the number of these assigned  
‘ letters was fulfilled ; and this is as sure as in the begin-  
‘ ning God made heaven and earth, for the Old Testa-  
‘ ment is figure of the New. But after Joachim and  
‘ Bede, from the beginning of Latin letters to the coming  
‘ of Christ were seven hundred years, so that Christ  
‘ came in the hundred of ‘ h ’ letter ; Christ went to  
‘ heaven, and after that, under the ‘ k ’ letter, Christ  
‘ delivered his church from nightly dread, the which was  
‘ the first dread that God’s church was in. After that  
‘ under ‘ m ’ letter, Christ delivered his church from the  
‘ arrow flying in day,—that was the second tribulation  
‘ of the church, and that was demynge by Joachim and  
‘ others, that under ‘ m ’ letter showed the multitude of  
‘ heretics contrarying the birth of Christ, his passion,  
‘ and his ascension, in that that ‘ m ’ letter most figured  
‘ Christ. Every letter may be sounded with open mouth

‘ save ‘ m ’ letter only, the which may not be sounded  
‘ but with close mouth. So Christ might not come out  
‘ of the maiden’s womb,’ &c. . . .

Looking at this treatise with less prepossession, and, as I hope, with a more ripened judgment than I was capable of bringing to it on first reading it, I find it exceedingly difficult to believe that its author was, at the time of writing it, a man who had risen to be a Fellow of Merton, the most learned College in Oxford, and a man who was soon to become distinguished as the first and the most potent of English reformers. It certainly contains some pious sentiments, and solemn denunciations of ecclesiastical corruption, not unworthy of Wycliffe, but the fanciful imbecilities which make up its substance, when viewed impartially, force upon me the conclusion that to attribute such a production to the Reformer is to do him great injustice.<sup>1</sup>

Five years subsequent to the date of this treatise—that is, in May 1361,—we find John de Wycliffe, ‘ priest,’ presented by the Master and Scholars of Balliol Hall to the church of Fylingham, in the archdeaconry of Stow ; and before the close of that year, we find that John de Wycliffe had become Warden, or Master, of Balliol. The clerks and scholars of that ‘ Hall,’ as it was then called, had sent a memorial to the pope, praying that the living of Abbodesle, recently given to the College, might be ap-

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix, Note B.

propriated more efficiently to their benefit: the pope complied with this request, and the papal bull was presented to the bishop of the diocese, in behalf of the scholars, by John de Wycliffe, as Master. We have seen that Balliol owed its origin to northern patronage—to the Balliols of Bernard Castle. The privilege of electing the Master was lodged in the College, and as the men of Balliol would, no doubt, be mostly 'northern' men, we can easily believe that northern affinities, even through that channel, had something to do with this promotion.<sup>1</sup>

The next point in the history of Oxford which brings the name of Wycliffe before us, is connected with the origin and early history of Canterbury Hall. In 1361, Simon Islep, the Archbishop of Canterbury, founded the Hall which bore that name; and made provision therein for a Warden and eleven scholars. The Warden, and three of the scholars, were to be monks of Christchurch, Canterbury; the remaining eight were to be secular priests. The scholars were to give themselves to the study, among other things, of logic, and of the civil and

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<sup>1</sup> Magister Joh. Wycliffe presbyter presenta. per Magist. et Scholares Aule de Balliol Oxon. ad Eccle. de Fylingham, vac. per Mort. Joh. Reyner, 11 d. May, 1361. in Archi Stow. Reg. Gynwell, fol. 123.

Coll. MS. of R. R. White, Bishop of Peterborough. *Memorand.* Quod nuper defuncto—rectore ecclesiæ parochialis de Abbodesle, Linco, dioc, in Archidiacon. Hunt. venit Magister Joh. de Wycliff tunc Custos seu Magister Aule de Balliol, Oxon. et exhibuit Venera. Patri Domino Johanni Lincol. Episcopo literas Apostolicas, &c. *Reg. Gynwell*, MS. folio 367. 368. Lewis, 4, 5.



canon law. For their maintenance the primate settled on them the parsonage of Pageham, and the manor of Wodeford, in the county of Northampton. This done, he purchased some old houses, which had been damaged by a late storm, and fitted them up for the reception of these studious persons. The wardenship fell to a monk named Wodehall ; a man, it would seem, of the sort who seldom fail to give evidence enough of their incapacity to govern others, by their manifest inability to govern themselves. To abate the cost of taking his degree, Wodehall claimed, though a monk, to be received as a secular student. His own Abbot protested against this manner of proceeding, as did some of the authorities of the University. But by the help of intrigue, with a free admixture of the kind of impudence which in this world sometimes serves the turn of its possessor, he succeeded, amidst a good deal of noise and opposition, in obtaining his object. These preliminaries did not promise well for the future of Canterbury Hall. We are not surprised, therefore, to find the Archbishop repenting, not more than four years later, of his attempt to subject a majority of secular clerks, to a minority of monks, who, having the Warden of their number, would be sure to possess a preponderance of power, especially under such a Warden as Wodehall. In the year 1365, accordingly, we find the Archbishop so far revoking his former plans, that Wodehall and the three monks were expelled, and the place of the three monks was supplied by three secular

scholars, and that of Wodehall, as Warden, by John de Wycliffe.

Was the John de Wycliffe so appointed the reformer? Until very recently there has been no question on this point? But a question is now raised upon it. We have seen that the name of Wycliffe is a local one. We have seen also, that the only locality from which it could have been derived is a parish so small that even now its population does not number two hundred souls. We have seen, moreover, that there does not appear to have been any second family in the place in the fourteenth century in circumstances to have given a learned education to its sons. Nevertheless, it is beyond doubt, that, during the life-time of the reformer, there were several clergymen who bore the name of Wycliffe. There was a Robert de Wycliffe, who was presented to the rectory of Wycliffe in 1362, by Katherine, relict of Roger Wycliffe: and a William de Wycliffe, presented to the same rectory, by John de Wycliffe, in the year following.<sup>1</sup> There was also, a Robert de Wycliffe appointed to a chantry in Cleveland, in the diocese of York, about 1368.<sup>2</sup> This may have been the person who relinquished the rectory of Wycliffe in 1363. It is certain also, that in 1361, the year in which John de Wycliffe the reformer became

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<sup>1</sup> Whitaker's *Richmondshire*, I. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Graves's *History of Cleveland Castle*, p.p. 138—147. Carlisle, 1808. *Gentleman's Mag.* 1841. Vol. II. p. 122.

Master of Balliol, a John de Wycliffe was collated by Archbishop Islep to the vicarage of Mayfield, the chief residence of the primate at that time, and until his decease. That this John de Wycliffe, the vicar of Mayfield, was not the reformer is certain, from the fact, that the Mayfield Wycliffe continued vicar of Mayfield until 1380, when he exchanged that living for Horsted Kaynes, in the same county, where he died, as rector of that parish, and prebend of Chichester, in 1383. At that time Wycliffe the reformer was resident in Lutterworth, giving himself laboriously to preaching and authorship.<sup>1</sup>

But the fact that there assuredly was at this time a second John de Wycliffe, who was not only a clergyman, but a person so far in favour with Islep, the Archbishop of Canterbury, as to have been appointed by him vicar of the parish in which the primate himself was chiefly resident,—has given rise to the question—is it not probable that in this John de Wycliffe of Mayfield, and not in John de Wycliffe the reformer, we find the person who was selected to be Warden of Canterbury Hall, in place of the monk Wodehall? Certainly, this question is not an unreasonable one; and great advantage has been supposed to lie on the side of settling it in the affirmative. For if this be the fact, then, we are told, the insinuations of such men as Anthony Wood, and Bishop Fell, who

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix, Note C.



ascribe the anti-papal zeal of Wycliffe to the circumstance that the court of Rome decided against him in the matter of his wardenship, falls to the ground, and leaves the fame of the reformer in this respect unsullied.

But for our own part, we must say, we are by no means careful to vindicate the fame of Wycliffe against such imbecile attacks. The man who could be influenced, in the manner supposed, by the incident mentioned, must have been a man doomed to be the creature of circumstances, and as the circumstances adapted to affect his course would be various and contradictory, so would his history have been. The chapter of accidents is never in one stay: and so must it be with the purposes of the man who has no power but to do as accidents may determine. He will, according to the adage, be everything by turns and nothing long. Heads of the Anthony Wood and Bishop Fell make, in which an anile bigotry leaves little or no place for the exercise of common sense, may not understand this—but if there be any such thing as a relation of *adequacy* between cause and effect, we think we may safely leave our readers to say, whether such a result as we have before us in the life of Wycliffe, *could* have proceeded, in anything beyond a very trivial degree, from such a cause.

It will appear, moreover, as we proceed, that while this question was under judgment in the papal court, Wycliffe committed himself in relation to some great principles, in a manner so notorious, as to demonstrate

how little the fate of his wardenship was likely to influence his public course.

Archbishop Islep, in founding the Hall, had provided that it should be competent to himself, or his successors, to remove the Warden at any time, and purely at their own pleasure. But Islep died the year after investing John de Wycliffe with that office. Langham, his successor in the see of Canterbury, had been a monk, and Abbot of Westminster. The new primate listened to the tale of the expelled monks ; and on the pretence that the recent change had been brought about by improper means, or when the late Archbishop was incapable of discharging a legal trust,—Wycliffe, and the three secular scholars introduced with him, were expelled, and Wodehall and the three monks were reinstated. Upon this, Wycliffe and the expelled scholars appealed from the decision of their metropolitan, so clearly in violation of the will of his predecessor, to the judgment of the pope. But the influence and bribes of the monastic litigants prevailed. After a dispute of something more than four years duration, judgment was given in their favour, That a man already alive, as Wycliffe was, to the corruptness of the existing ecclesiastical system, should have accepted this result as new evidence on that point, may be readily admitted ; but it is not easy to suppose anything beyond this as the effect of such an event on the mind of such a man. Nor could Wycliffe himself, we think, have expected the issue to be much otherwise. On the one side were three

secular scholars, young men, and probably very poor, with a Warden, perhaps, all but as poor as themselves, and little inclined, we may suppose, to expend money in such a cause, even if such expenditure had been within his power, when, whatever might be the clear equity of the case, the result, from other circumstances, was so doubtful. For on the other side was the energy of Wodehall and his monks, who would spare no appeal to the fanaticism of their brother monks—a body most zealous on all occasions to secure a good footing in the University; and in addition to all such influence in their favour, was the whole weight of the position filled by Langham, not only as the Archbishop of Canterbury, but as being ex-officio trustee for the foundation in question. As the prospect of success in these circumstances, especially with Rome as the court of appeal, must at best have been very slender, the feeling of disappointment at the issue, if experienced at all, could not, we think, have been anything very considerable. It should be remembered too, that the honours of a wardenship were no new thing in the experience of Wycliffe. In 1370, the date of this papal verdict, nine years had passed since the reformer had become Master of Balliol. We know not how it came to pass that his possession of the latter office was of such short duration. We know however, that when he exchanged the living of Fylingham in 1368, for that of Ludgershall, a benefice of less value, but nearer Oxford, he did so, not as Master of Balliol, but simply as John



de Wycliffe, 'priest.'<sup>1</sup> Whether he resigned the Mastership of Balliol in favour of the Wardenship of Canterbury Hall, or from some other cause, does not appear. But the fact of his resignation from some cause, during this interval, is beyond a doubt. The following extract from

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<sup>1</sup> Johannes de Wyclif, presbiter presentatus per fratrem Johannem de Pavely priorem Hospitalis Johannis Jerusalem in Anglia ad ecclesiam de Lotegareshall Linc. dioc. Archidiacon Bucks per resignat. domini Johannis Wythornewyk, ex causa permutationis de ipsa cum ecclesia parochiali de Fylingham, dicte dioc. admissus, Nov. 12, 1368. Lewis, I. 17. The entry in the Register shows that the design of this change was, that he might be nearer Oxford, and that by not being obliged to reside he might be more at liberty to give himself to his labours in the University. The words are 'Idibus Aprilis Anno dni. millesimo cccmo lxxiii apud parcum Stowe concessa fuit licentia magistro Johannis de Wyclefe, rectori ecclesiæ de Filyngham, quod posset se absentare ab ecclesia sua insistendo literarum studio in Universitate Oxon. per biennium.' Reg. Bokyngham, Memoranda, fol. lvi. Wycliffe's Bible, Oxford. Pref. VIII.

No one has given any account of this place called Ludgershall, sometimes Lutgarshall, or Lurgesshall, in connexion with the life of Wycliffe. It was once a place of some importance, and is supposed to have been the residence of some of the Anglo-saxon kings. In 1141, the castle of Ludgershall gave shelter to the empress Matilda, in her flight from Winchester towards the stronger fortress at Devizes. No mention being made of the castle of Ludgershall after the reign of Henry III., it is supposed to have been one of the many places of the sort that were dismantled about that time, to humble the power of the barons. Some vestiges of the building might be traced not long since in a farm yard. But the dismantling of the castle was not the fall of the town. Ludgershall continued to be a borough by prescription, and sent representatives to all the Parliaments of Edward I, to three of Edward II, to three of Edward III, and also in the ninth year of Richard II. In later times, it has kept its place in the list of our rotten boroughs, being reserved for the memorable 'Schedule A,' which some of us have lived to see.

the papal bull presented by him to the Bishop of Lincoln in 1361, will show that even to be Master of Balliol was not in those days, to preside over a very opulent fraternity. The bull states, that 'Pope Clement had been petitioned by the clerks and scholars of Balliol Hall,

There was formerly an alien hospital or priory in Ludgershall, subordinate to the priory of Santingfield in Picardy. It was confiscated with the other alien priories in the kingdom by Henry VI, and given to Trinity College, Cambridge. Two-thirds of the tithes of the parish were given in 1190 to the priory and convent of Bermondsey—in 1291 it was valued at £6. 13s. 4d. per annum, under Henry VIII. at £17. 6s. 8d. Its chief recommendation manifestly was that it was not more than sixteen miles from Oxford, and that the rector could be inducted without the necessity of constant residence.

The manor of Ludgershall, and the advowson of the living, came to the Rev. Claudius Martyn, the father of the present incumbent, by purchase in 1784. The town has dwindled from what it once was to almost nothing. Though very recently, not only free-holders, but copy-holders, and even lease-holders of any amount for three years, were allowed by their votes to send two members to parliament to watch over the interests of Ludgershall, the number of 'enlightened and independent electors' did not exceed seventy, which was about the number of the houses. The last census gives the population as little more than five hundred. The fairs, the markets, everything that gave the place importance as a borough, have ceased. The streets are straggling, penury-looking, neither paved nor lighted. The embattled tower of the church, and its strong buttressed sides, are probably as old as the time of Wycliffe, but within there is nothing beside the walls to aid the imagination in travelling so far back. On our visit to Ludgershall, we were not so fortunate as to see the rector—that gentleman may be aware that he is officially a successor to our great reformer; but, we may venture to say, that at the time of our enquiries, he must have been the only person in the place that such intelligence had reached. So do places fossilate even in this busy England of ours. See Lyson's *Magna Britannia*, Buckinghamshire, 597, 598. Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary*, Art. Ludgershall. *Buckinghamshire Directory*.



‘ who had presented to his Holiness, that by the devout  
‘ bounty and alms of their founders, there were many  
‘ students and clerks in the said Hall, and each of them  
‘ had anciently received only ——— pence a week, and  
‘ when they took their degree of Master of Arts, they were  
‘ obliged immediately to leave the said Hall, so that they  
‘ could not, by reason of their poverty, make any progress  
‘ in other studies, but sometimes were forced, for the sake  
‘ of a livelihood, to follow some mechanic employment :  
‘ that Sir William de Felton, having compassion on them,  
‘ desired to augment the number of the said scholars, and  
‘ to ordain that they should have in common, books of  
‘ diverse faculties, and that every one of them should  
‘ receive *sufficient clothing*, and *twelve-pence per week*, and  
‘ that they might freely remain in the said Hall, whether  
‘ they took their Master’s degree or Doctor’s degree or not,  
‘ until they should obtain a competent ecclesiastical bene-  
‘ fice.’<sup>1</sup> Thus the highest point to which the hopes of the  
‘ students and clerks’ of Balliol might aspire, as regarded  
the worldly and self-indulgent, was, that they might  
possess ‘ *sufficient clothing*,’ and ‘ *twelve-pence per week*.’

In respect to endowment, accordingly, beside the advantage of being founded by a living primate of all England, we can suppose Canterbury Hall to have exhibited prospects little, if at all, inferior to those of Balliol. But it is possible that Wycliffe may have relin-

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis. Chap. I. p. 4.



quished the mastership of Balliol from other causes, some time during the four years which intervene between his election to that office in 1361, and our first intimation relating to his connexion with Canterbury Hall in 1365. It is at least as easy to understand how he should have resigned the mastership of Balliol to become master of Canterbury Hall, in 1365, as it is to understand how he should have resigned the former office, and have become nothing more than John de Wycliffe—‘priest,’ in 1368; and the greater difficulty here is assuredly a fact, whatever may be said of the less.<sup>1</sup>

It is proper also to observe, that had the John de Wycliffe chosen to the wardenship of Canterbury Hall, been the person of that name who was vicar of Mayfield, it is reasonable to suppose, that, according to the usage of the time in such cases, he would have been described as ‘vicar of Mayfield,’ in the instrument appointing him to the new dignity. Had he once ceased, moreover, to be vicar of Mayfield, as we must suppose he would, on the acceptance of a wardenship, it is exceedingly improbable that we should ever have heard of him again in connexion with Mayfield. But he remains in possession—apparently in undisturbed possession, of that living, until 1380—a fact which with us is decisive that the John de Wycliffe

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<sup>1</sup> The records of Balliol show that in 1366 John Hugate was master; Carta, No. 28 in pyxide S. Laurentii in *Judaismo in thesaurar.* Coll. Balliol. Wycliffe’s Bible, Oxford. Preface VII.

of Mayfield, was *not* the John de Wycliffe of Canterbury Hall. Nor must we fail to mention, that the language in which the archbishop describes the man of his choice, as master of Canterbury Hall, accords well with the character of a man of high academic standing, such as Wycliffe the reformer had certainly by this time become. Mention is made of him, as a person in whose 'fidelity, 'circumspection, and industry,' the primate had great confidence, as one on whom he had fixed his attention, in disposing of this trust, on account of the 'honesty of his 'life, his laudable conversation, and knowledge of letters.' Such a description, however, would accord but indifferently with what we know concerning the Wycliffe of Mayfield, who, though favoured with high patronage, finished his course apparently, as the common-place men of all time have done, leaving no trace of power behind him. From the quiet obscurity in which this person lived to the end of his days, the presumption would seem to be, that he was a man little apt to give the world much disturbance, for good or evil, and that his tastes did not lie at all in an academic direction ; certainly not sufficiently so to have led the archbishop to appoint him to such a trust, and in such terms.

We have thought it right to say thus much upon the question that has been raised on this point, notwithstanding we have evidence in reserve, which, if taken alone, would be sufficient to place the identity of Wycliffe the reformer with the Wycliffe of Canterbury Hall, beyond

all doubt. William Wodford or Wydforde, who wrote largely against Wycliffe soon after his decease,<sup>1</sup> speaks distinctly of the Wycliffe whom he assails as having been master of Canterbury Hall, and of his mortification on being deprived of that office by the Archbishop and the Pope, as the corrupt source of all his zeal against the existing order of things.<sup>2</sup>

If it should be objected that the Wycliffe of Balliol had so far committed himself as a reformer, before 1365, as not to allow of our supposing that the primate could have spoken of him in such terms of commendation, our answer must be, that at that time, Wycliffe of Balliol was not more than some forty years of age, and that we have no proof of his having taken any ground as a reformer prior to the date of that document, inconsistent with his being so described in it. We have shown, in a former publication on this subject, and purpose to show still more clearly in the present, that the almost entire inattention to the dates of the different writings of our reformer, on the part

<sup>1</sup> Brown, *Fasciculus Rerum*, Tom. I. p.p. 190—295.

<sup>2</sup> *Septuaginta duo questiones de sacramento Eucharistiæ*, (MS. Harl, 31, fol. 31.) ‘Et hæc contra religiosos insania generata est ex corruptione. Nam priusquam per religiosos possessionatos et prælatos expulsus fuerat de aula monachorum Cantuariæ, nichil contra possessionatos attemptavit, quod esset alicujus ponderis; et priusquam per religiosos mendicantes reprovatus fuit publice de heresibus in sacramento altaris, nichil contra eos attemptavit, sed posterius multipliciter eos diffamavit; ita quod doctrinæ suæ malæ et infestæ contra religiosos et possessionatos et mendicantes generatæ fuerunt ex putrefactionibus et melancoliis.’ Wycliffe’s Bible, Oxford. Pref. VII.



of his biographers, has been the cause of great confusion in the accounts given of his history, and that his memory has suffered not a little from this circumstance.

Still, the question returns, who was this new personage in our history, this John de Wycliffe of Mayfield? Was he of the same family with Wycliffe the reformer? This we cannot suppose. Brothers do not bear the same christian name. Was he of any second family then resident in the parish of Wycliffe? This is scarcely possible. The parish that does not at this day contain two hundred souls, and those mostly poor persons, must, we think, have possessed fewer people then, and have been much poorer then than now. May we then suppose that this Wycliffe was of some family, which, having derived its name from the parish of Wycliffe, had become located elsewhere; and having grown into comparative respectability, soon afterwards became extinct? This may be taken, we think, as the most probable solution.

On the evidence adduced, then, we still hold to the received opinion, that the Wycliffe of Canterbury Hall was Wycliffe the reformer. From this point in his history, moreover, we enter beyond doubt on that portion of his career, in which he becomes more and more conspicuous as the advanced spirit of his times, on nearly all questions touching the necessity of a reform in the church—in her head and members, in her discipline and doctrine.



## CHAPTER IV.

### WYCLIFFE AND THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS.

**W**YCLIFFE began his labours as a reformer, by an attack on the Religious Orders, especially on the Friars, who were, according to the vow of their profession, *mendicant* Orders. Against the fraternities known under those names, did Wycliffe point both his logic and his rhetoric, with that degree of iteration and intensity, commonly to be seen in the men who have a marked vocation in the world—a genuine work to do.

On the other hand, it should be admitted that neither monks nor mendicants had come without an errand. These also had their work to do, and the work done by them, for a season, must be pronounced to have been in the main a good work. During a succession of centuries, their influence as the friends of science, literature, art, and religion, was such, that we scarcely know where any one

of these great elements of human progress would have been safe without such aid. In respect to science especially, their genius and labour entitled them to high praise, inasmuch as to become distinguished in such matters, was not to rise above the vulgar without hazard. The reproach of necromancy, and the probability of being exposed to the fate of the confessor and the martyr, was ever in the view of the gifted men who gave themselves to such pursuits. There is, as we shall see, in the history of these orders, a dark side ; but, on the whole, the man who challenged such combatants, needed to be thoroughly master of his case, and even then we may well wish him a good deliverance.

Those earnest spirits which braved the dangers always about the path of the man suspected of magic, rather than conceal their passion for science, have imparted a deep interest, in the view of thoughtful men, to the whole field of medieval history. In the accounts given by our popular historians of the great St. Dunstan, we may have met with more to excite our merriment, than to dispose us to wise reflection. But the man who stands out, as this man does, from the dark ground of his times, must have been a man of some force and brilliancy. It is true, in the hands of his biographers his story becomes mythic, and mythic just in the form to be expected in such an age. But it is not hard to separate between the fact and the fiction. It is clear enough that this Anglo-Saxon monk greatly excelled the men of his day, as a me-



chanic, as an artist, and as a musician. With regard also to accomplishments more immediately clerical, we have reason to think that he was not behind the most advanced in his time ; but the skill with which he wrought in gold, and silver, and brass, and iron ; and the mechanical as well as the chemical genius which he evinced, confounded the ignorance, not only of the multitude, but of courtiers and princes. By many, however, the praise of all this was given, not to the monk, but to the demon to whom he had manifestly sold himself. Indeed, the actual voice of this demon once came, at his bidding, upon the ears of the sages of his day ; but it was as that of a syren, or of an angel of light, in the sounds of a harp—probably an Eolian harp—which, fixed in a certain position, gave forth sweet music, without the touch of man. History shows that this wonder-worker was powerful enough to keep his enemies at bay ; but to say, ‘he hath a devil,’ was to do even so powerful a personage grave mischief, and at little cost either of wit or wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

Girald, who in the first year of the twelfth century became Archbishop of York, was a man studious in some forbidden directions ; and in setting forth his wisdom, could give to it all the advantage of a ready wit, and a flowing eloquence. But his discursive tastes, and the natural freedom of the man, caused much scandal through those regions where dulness is supposed to be the most

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<sup>1</sup> Turner’s *Anglo-Saxons*, II. 385—400.

fitting ally of piety, and ignorance is accounted the most natural safeguard to devotion.

The good Archbishop made considerable benefactions to the church, but it availed him not. It was found at his decease that he had been wont to read many strange books : and if he was not denied christian burial, it was by no means for the want of effort on the part of the amiable and wise of his generation to fasten that stigma upon his memory.

In the following century the perilous imputation of being addicted to magic was cast on the famous Michael Scot. Brother Michael was a great linguist. He excelled in mathematics, in astrology, in chemistry, in medicine, and in philosophy generally. He no doubt flattered himself that he could prognosticate from the stars ; thought, moreover, that he might some day succeed in transmuting metals into gold ; and persuaded himself that his drugs could be made to derive a potency from aids which we should ourselves be tempted to describe as very weak and very superstitious. But as the result of his labours, did we believe all that has been written of him, we should picture him to our imagination as rarely found beyond his enchanted circle, where, wand in hand, he spends his days and nights much less in conversing with the mortals of this world, than with spiritual wickednesses from the world beneath. Michael, after figuring in many a rude northern ballad, has found due place and fame in the Lay of the Last Minstrel.

But of all the names in our history that might be placed in this series, that of Roger Bacon is the most memorable. Bacon died some thirty years before Wycliffe was born. If the one was the great precursor of the Protestantism of a later age, the other was no less the precursor of its philosophy. Bacon studied in Paris, lectured in Oxford, and became a Franciscan that he might the better give himself to labour as a scholar and as a man of science. He was learned in many tongues, great as a mathematician, prolific in physical experiments. In optics, he greatly astonished his contemporaries. Strange things did he, with his concave glasses, and with his convex glasses. The mystery of the Camera Obscura, the power of the telescope and of the microscope, the use of spectacles, the composition of gunpowder,—all were familiar to him. He was, moreover, profound in chronology, in logic, in metaphysics, and in theology. But in natural science we know only imperfectly what he did ; still less what he was capable of doing. In his paper on Old Age, addressed from his prison to the pontiff, Nicholas the fourth, he says,—‘being hindered, ‘partly by the accusations, partly by the intolerance, ‘and partly by the talk of the vulgar, I was not willing ‘to make experiment of all things :’ but with a dignity becoming a true philosopher, he adds,—‘we must remember that there are many books accounted magical, ‘whose only fault is, that they reveal the majesty of ‘wisdom.’ Among the things which he did not, but



which he intimates might be done, he mentions the construction of an engine that should be made to sail faster under the guidance of one man, than others sail by the help of many. Does this point to the steam-ship, or to some other propelling power yet to become known to us? Again, he writes,—‘it is possible to give to the motion of a carriage an incalculable swiftness, and that without the aid of any living creature.’ Was there in brother Roger’s imagination the dim shadow of something quite as novel as a modern railway, or of something even more wonderful than that? That he had mastered the theory of the diving-bell is beyond doubt; and it is certain that he had the notion of its being possible so to accommodate our species with wings, as to enable them to fly like birds in the air. That a man whose actual doings were so wonderful, and whose thoughts as to what it was possible to do were so much more wonderful, should be accounted by the dullards of his time as full of diabolism, so as even to render his own denunciations against the vice of necromancy unavailing, was all but inevitable. The wise few who had liberally aided him, and who, to the last, would have befriended him, were overpowered by the fanatical many. He saw his writings put under an interdict by his own order; was silenced as a teacher; and suffered ten years imprisonment after the sixty-fourth year of his age! For a short space before his decease he obtained his liberty again, and he continued to wage the battle of existence with a strong hand, until

his eightieth year. It would have been pleasant to look on a necromancer of this order.<sup>1</sup>

What happened in such cases in England happened everywhere. As independent thinking on theology rarely failed to bring with it the charge of heresy, so the investigation of science, conducted in that spirit, exposed the student to the charge of magic. We have seen that the dignity of Archbishop did not suffice to protect a man disposed towards such tastes, against such penalties. But we have to add, that even the possession of the chair of St. Peter was not found to be safe-guard enough against the consequences of supposed delinquency in this form. Gerbert, afterwards Pope Silvester, in his passion for science, and in the eminence of his knowledge and skill, was scarcely inferior to Roger Bacon, especially when we bear in mind that he flourished some two centuries earlier. But many and foul were the calumnies heaped upon him—as the penalty of being so much in advance of his age. One of his greatest sins was, that he had even dared to take up his sojourn among the Moors of Spain, that he might acquaint himself with their learning and philosophy, as though anything but evil could possibly come from the ‘godless’ universities of that infidel country. Even our own William of Malmesbury describes him as having learnt among that people ‘how to call up spirits from hell.’<sup>2</sup> It is true this doomed pontiff, having

<sup>1</sup> *Opus Majus*, edited by Jebb. *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Gest. Reg. lib. II. c. x.*

more to do, it would seem, with 'spirits from hell' than with such as come from a less exceptional fellowship, was not sent to the stake, nor imprisoned, nor dethroned: but from all that befel Silvester, we might have conjectured pretty safely, had history been silent, as to the probable fate of such offenders when found in a humbler condition.<sup>1</sup>

Padua, alone, a little before the birth of Wycliffe, had given two men of science to the flames under the charge of necromancy.—Villa Nova, a physician, eighty years of age; and Peter d'Apono, a mere youth, but a youth who had given signs of extraordinary capacity.

In consistency with all these proceedings, the invention of printing, as is well known, was denounced as a device of the Evil One. The books were produced in such numbers, so cheaply, and so completely the transcripts of each other—even to a repetition of the mistakes! What could bespeak the agency of the powers of darkness if these things did not?

We do honour to the men who became martyrs for religion, and we do well;—let us do honour also to the martyrs for science, for that too is well.

But if the real or the pretended *mysteries* of science often exposed its professors to such inconvenient conse-

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<sup>1</sup> Baronius would fain have excluded Sylvester from the list of the popes, but it was not possible. Biovius, a Franciscan who wrote a life of Sylvester in the early part of the seventeenth century, is more liberal. Turner's History of England, IV. 234, 235.



quences, the more practical application of scientific discoveries was applauded even by monks and by the multitude. In such connexions the inspiration appears to have been regarded as coming from above; in the other as from beneath; but in both, the strange was identified with the marvellous—the supernatural. This better inspiration gave to the middle age its architecture, its sculpture, its painting, its decorations. It was seen that the science of the time knew how to clear the forest, to drain the morass, and to convert the wilderness into the home of fertility and beauty. The rule of St. Benedict required that his monks should give a large space of time to the labours of the field. Even the Abbot could glory in giving himself, upon occasions, to the use of the scythe or the reaping-hook, side by side with his brother monks. The church and abbey lands, in consequence of this greater intelligence of their owners, were everywhere the best cultivated. The grape of England, especially in Gloucestershire, was much richer and more matured than it has ever been since. The gusto with which our forefathers drank of the wine which it yielded, warrants us in believing that it possessed no mean substance and spirit. The difficulties and cost of importing such commodities would be favourable to this studious culture of our native produce. Wine, indeed, may be deemed a luxury, but it must be admitted that the useful went along with the luxurious in the history of the religious orders. It is recorded of Michael, the famous Abbot of

Glastonbury,—the man who could make ploughs, and work hard at them when he had made them.—that to accommodate the people dependant on the monastery, he built nearly a hundred houses. In this manner, the place of a convent, at one time wholly unpeopled, grew up to be the place of a town. The abbey at Evesham, stood upon a spot which before its erection had been a deserted forest: and the neighbourhood of the no less famous abbey of Croyland, was once a region of impassable streams and marshes. In those districts monastic science changed the whole face of nature. Matthew Paris relates minutely how the abbey of St. Alban's became, through the fostering care of those who presided over it, the nucleus of the town which bears its name. There is scarcely a spot through England bearing an ecclesiastical designation, from whose history facts of this nature might not be gleaned.

Nor is it to be denied that the monastic establishments served everywhere as centres of hospitality to the wayfarer and the needy. The sound of the convent-bell often came to the ear of the fainting traveller, through the openings of the forest, or across the desolate moor, as the promise of shelter, refreshment, and rest. Hospitality was the boast of those religious brotherhoods. Nothing was more dreaded by them than the reproach of being wanting in that virtue. Many a valuable bequest came to them in the faith that it would be applied, at least, in good part, to such uses. It is beyond doubt,

however, that in times of dearth, sacrifices of a magnanimous description were frequently made by these fraternities, to meet the wants of the starving outcasts who flocked to the gates, and looked up to them for bread and shelter. They have been known in such times to sell their plate, to part with some of their most valued treasures, and even to mortgage their lands, that the poor might not be sent away unfed. While in times of invasion, and of civil disturbance, the church and the abbey presented almost the only sanctuary, and the priest or the monk were the only parties left to mediate between the strong and the weak.

But concerning the *religion* which obtained among these communities, little good can be said. Piety like that of the venerable Bede, might exist as the rare exception, but only, as we fear, in that degree. Though all convents were founded ostensibly on a religious basis, they became, for the most part, so occupied, after a time, in efforts to accumulate, to preserve, and economize their temporalities, as to exhibit so many experiments in the way of a materialized communism, rather than so many brotherhoods rising above the cares or pleasures of this sublunary state, that they might give themselves to exercises tending to prepare them for a world of much higher intelligence and spirituality. The good supplies of fish, of game, or of similar commodities that might find their way to the abbey larder; the safety of the corn-field, the promise of the barley-crop, the prospect of the vin-



tage—not to mention grosser and some forbidden sensualities—these were the pleasant things which had too constant a place in the visions of the portly abbot, no less than in the eyes of his leaner and younger brother, who looked from his novitiate, as through a vista, to the time when a larger share in the enjoyment of such material pleasures would be ceded to him. Each monastery was a little kingdom; its president was its sovereign; and all subject to him were broken up into little parties, according to their estimate of the personal rule to which they happened to be subject. Very bitter, too, were the feuds which sometimes grew up from this source, relating too commonly to details little in harmony with those vows against the love of carnal things which the disputants had taken upon them. You listen to the storm, and if you enquire the cause, you probably learn that it is about the conduct of the new abbot in diminishing the number of dishes allowed by his predecessor; or because he has his own way of dispensing the bounty of the establishment; or because he rules with a severity which abridges the personal liberty of the brotherhood, or with a laxity which allows everything to run to waste and disorder. Prayer-hours of course come, and reading hours also, but it is not always on themes so much above the worldly that the thoughts of the monk go forth the most freely, or that his language becomes the most expressive of earnestness and passion. Matins, and vespers, and masses, all are performed with a military exactness, it

may be, as to time and mode, but all leave the mind as little under the influence of anything distinctively christian, as it would have been, had the religion of the land been a deteriorated paganism from old Greece or old Rome. Do you doubt the truth of this representation, good reader? Look through the history lately given us from the past, concerning the brave abbot of Bury St. Edmunds, and of his subordinates—a person so highly belauded by our somewhat whimsical friend, Thomas Carlyle,—and it will be seen how possible it was for men to persuade themselves in those times that the beginning and the end of all virtue might consist in swearing fealty to a patron saint, as to another Mars or Apollo; and in doing battle, as occasion may require, for all lands, hereditaments, and privileges, said to pertain of right to the chosen saint or divinity. It is not too much to say, that the mythology of Greece and Rome was not by any means more polytheistic, than was the baptized paganism which prevailed to so large an extent in Europe, under the name of Christianity, in the middle age.

On no subject is there greater need of enlightenment among a large portion of our countrymen at this day, than about the potency of voluntaryism, taken *alone*, to give us a pure religion. It is not only a fact that nearly all the corruptions of Christianity as seen in its later history, existed in a more or less developed state before the age of Constantine, when its means of support were of necessity voluntary—but even in the later years of

that emperor, and during centuries afterwards, the utmost that was done by the state was so to recognize Christianity as to leave all men free, princes and people alike—to support or endow the gospel from their own private resources, to any extent they pleased. The celibacy of the clergy, so far as it was really the usage of the church, would of course enable the priesthood to sustain themselves, when necessary, on very limited means. But this very usage, while it narrowed the wants of the clergy as men, stimulated their cupidity and ambition as priests. Their order came to be to them as their family: their church took the place of their country: and man was before them as made for the priest, not the priest as made for man. Had the clergy in those early times been allowed to rest their claims for support on enactments of state, in the manner familiar to us, it is probable their pretensions as priests would never have been carried so high, and that their power over the human conscience would not have become so formidable. But being left dependant on the mere feeling of their votaries for the means of sustaining the splendour of their hierarchy, and even for the supply of their necessities, they became skilful in an extraordinary degree in obtaining contributions from that source. Many a weak conscience while living, and many a profligate or flagitious offender when dying, was readily induced to heap wealth upon the men regarded as having the keys of the world to come at their disposal!



In the reign of our Edward III. it was found, that, in these circumstances, full half the land of England had passed into the hands of ecclesiastical persons ; and the intervention of our statute law was found necessary—not to supplement a voluntaryism which had proved too feeble to sustain the outward things of religion, but to put a check on this morbid action of a great principle, and to prevent our land from becoming, as it promised to be ere long, the sole possession of an overgrown priest-caste. Of all the forms of Christianity, Romanism is that which can best dispense with state aid, inasmuch as it can avail itself, with an unscrupulousness not known elsewhere, of all the means wherewith to turn the weaknesses of human nature to its own account. The extinction of state churches, accordingly, would not be the extinction of Romanism,—it might only be the removal of a hindrance to its development in forms still more corrupt. For the true origin of this form of religion we must look much lower than to the doings of legislators—it has its root in tendencies common to humanity. Voluntaryism may be made to work most healthfully in connexion with intelligence and rectitude, but no principle is more dangerous as used by the designing to acquire a mastery over the ignorant.

It was quite natural that the wealth accumulated, in the manner now stated, by the monastic orders, should contribute powerfully towards producing the corrupt state of things so observable in the later history of these

fraternities. Another cause, however, tending not less strongly towards the same result, is before us in the ambitious meddling of the court of Rome, which prompted it to take the monastic establishments, by little and little, under its immediate superintendence, granting them exemption from all episcopal oversight in their respective localities. The monks became, by this stroke of policy, the sworn adherents of the papacy, in a degree unknown among the secular clergy. Being free from all fear of visitation, or rebuke, except from a power so remote, and so easy to bribe when it might not be deceived, the evils to be expected followed. The 'lazy' monk, the 'fat' monk, were words which became familiar to men's ears, because the appearances which corroborated them were familiar to their sight. The papacy, accordingly, was doomed to see the most submissive of its children decline in reputation as they grew in subserviency; and learnt, after a while, to repent in secret, of a course of proceeding, in which the immediate gain was found to be greatly outweighed by the ultimate loss.

It was this posture of affairs in the monasteries which prepared the way for the appearance of the several orders of Friars. The monks began by affecting a greater separateness from the world, and a more undivided consecration of themselves to religious duties, than was seen in the secular clergy, or than was practicable in their circumstances. But as the monks had claimed to be, in this sense, a more 'religious' order than the clergy; so the

friars, in their turn, claimed to be received as being more 'religious' than the monks. The great protest of the friars, as against the monks, was twofold—partly against their vast wealth, as having so sensualized them as to have made them the dishonour of Christendom; and partly against their habits of seclusion, which left the world beyond the walls of the convent to perish in its ignorance and vice. For a season this protest was borne sincerely. The friars became, in a very conspicuous form, the religious voluntaries of the time. They were as often called 'mendicants' as 'friars,' and this because of the principle in their discipline which required that the voluntary offerings of the people, in return for their religious services, should be their only means of support. They pointed to what the rich abbey-lands had done for the monks, and declared against the holding of such possessions on the part of men professing to have given themselves to a religious life. They complained of those opulent communities as shutting themselves up in cloisters, while the people around them were in a state of heathen darkness, and declared for the function of an itinerant ministry, which should convey instruction to the people, not only from church to church, but from house to house, and into the open air. Nor did they fail to expatiate on the ignorance which so largely characterized the inmates of the monastery, opposing to it their own wiser and loftier purpose, which required that the utmost available learning and culture should be brought



to the aid of religion by means of authorship, by seizing on positions of influence in the universities, as well as by preaching.

It was felt very widely, that the ground which these men professed to take, was ground which wise men might have resolved to occupy; that the work to which they promised to give themselves, was work needing to be done. There were four distinct orders of friars, but the orders of St. Dominic and of St. Francis were the most powerful; and of these it is the latter that are much the most conspicuous in English history.

In our country, these orders have long ceased to have any visible existence. But in the south of Europe, especially in Italy, the Dominican, with his loose white robe, and dark broad hat, still sometimes arrests your attention in the public ways; while the Franciscan, with his brown garb, his cord about his waist, his feet bare, and his tonsured head uncovered, meets you in every street, on every high-road, and even in the most thinly-peopled districts. In that land, this order is now very much what it was in England in the time of Wycliffe. True to their vocation as '*preaching* friars,' in Italy they are almost the only preachers, the duties of the secular clergy being restricted, for the most part, to the services of the mass and the confessional.

We have said thus much about the religious orders, because, as we have stated, the circumstance which first called forth Wycliffe in the spirit of a reformer, was his

controversy with the mendicants. By this time, something more than a century had passed since the first brotherhood of this description made their appearance in Oxford; and during this interval, the 'new orders,' as they were called, lost much of their popularity, and not undeservedly. The famous Robert Grosstete, Bishop of Lincoln, who had been their warm patron for a time, saw reason before his decease, to denounce them in the strongest terms. Fitzralph, who in 1333 was Chancellor of Oxford, and in 1347 became Archbishop of Armagh, spoke of them in similar terms, in a discourse preached before Pope Innocent and his court, at Avignon, in 1357.<sup>1</sup> One of the charges commonly urged against the mendicants, had respect to the artifice with which they contrived to accumulate large wealth, evading, if not violating, the laws of their founder on that point. They were vehemently accused of making a merchandize of their powers of absolution, their 'pardons' being dispensed in the most sordid manner, and the people withdrawn from the oversight of the clergy, to the great detriment of religion, and of public morals. In the Universities, loud complaints were raised against them. Some of their men of learning and genius—and they had many such—had risen to positions of influence in Paris and Oxford; and the subalterns of the order had shown themselves so intent on making proselytes among the students, who were

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<sup>1</sup> Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, I. 532. *et seq.*

commonly sent at a very tender age to those seminaries, that, as we have seen, parents, in great numbers, resolved not to allow their sons to be exposed to such influences.

From a very early period in their history, the friars succeeded in applying large sums of money in the erection and adornment of their convents and churches. Their order might not possess lands; but it was ruled, that their buildings, whether as dwelling-places or as places of worship, might be anything they pleased. Hence the gorgeous splendour of many of the Franciscan churches. In 1299, the Franciscans attempted to bribe the Pope by no less a sum than fifty thousand ducats in gold, to permit a violation of the rule of Francis, so far as to allow of their holding property in land. The Pope, it is said, sent for the money from the banker to whom it had been entrusted; and having directed that it should be appropriated to his own uses, his holiness quietly informed the astonished suitors, that the monies they had accumulated were, in his eyes, the proof of their delinquency; and admonished them to be more observant of the will of their founder in future than they had been in time past.<sup>1</sup>

Like the Hebrew race among ourselves, they became the richer in moveables, as the consequence of being precluded from possessing the immoveable. Of the manner in which they acquitted themselves as vendors of the

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew of Westminster, ad. ann. 1299.



spiritual commodities regarded as being at their disposal, Armachanus says, 'I have in my diocese of Armagh, 'about two thousand persons, who stand condemned by 'the censures of the church, pronounced every year 'against murderers, thieves, and such-like malefactors, 'of all which number, scarcely fourteen have applied to 'me or my clergy for absolution. Yet they all receive 'the sacraments as others do, because they are absolved, 'or pretend to be absolved, by friars.'<sup>1</sup> Grosstete had strongly censured the itinerant 'pardoners,' on this ground, long before, and their usage in this particular had only become more settled by long practice.

In the University of Paris, the complaints urged against these fraternities, were as loud and general as in Oxford, and on the same grounds. By the defenders of the Universities, it was maintained, that friars, as belonging to a religious order, were ineligible as such to any official position in such establishments—the design of the Universities being, not conventual, but secular, for the education of laymen and of the secular clergy; and that to concede a footing to the mendicants in such places, would be to admit the disorder into the seats of learning, which had made its way into the church, where these men, in virtue of privilege from the pope, and contrary to the spirit and letter of their institute, presumed to preach

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<sup>1</sup> See the extended discourse of Armachanus on this subject in Fox, Acts and Mon : I. 536—541.

without waiting for any licence from a Bishop, and to receive confessions, and to assume in all things a spiritual oversight of the people, in contempt of the authority vested by the ancient law of the church in its vicars and curates. But to the learned men who reasoned after this manner, others were opposed who were no less learned—among whom was the great Thomas Aquinas, and Albertus Magnus: and under such leadership the friars continued to hold the ground they had taken, though not without some fluctuations and reverses.

But the harm done by these troublesome people at Oxford, was small, compared with what came from the malpractices of the more ignorant and corrupt among them, in their dealings with the common people. Chaucer's portrait of the 'pardoner,' should be remembered in this connexion. It gives with distinctness and force the points which called forth the indignant rebuke of such men as Grosstete, Fitzralph, and Wycliffe. This itinerant vendor of spiritual merchandize—this Tetzal of the fourteenth century—on coming into an upland town or village, sets forth his credentials in the shape of bulls from the pope, and other sealed instruments. These are lauded as giving him authority to proceed with his 'holy work,' unimpeded by 'priest or clerk,' or by officials of any kind. In his preaching, the constant theme of the friar is the evil of covetousness. On this subject he gives forth his memoriter oration, in tones of high authority, having been careful to garnish it well with old stories,

such as 'lewed (lay) people love.' His aim in such discouraging, is not to reform the sinner, but to get money himself, by showing the harm that is likely to come from it, in this world and the next, to those who hold it. Money, or money's worth, he must have, and that from the poorest, not excepting the most needy widow, or the starving children, that may be wronged by it. Beside the wallet in which the mendicant deposits the wool, the cheese, or the wheat, contributed to the convent, was another, filled with articles of marvellous efficacy. From amidst rags and relics of all sorts, he takes the bone of a sheep, once a 'jewes sheep,' and lifting it up before the gaping crowd, he assures them, on his faith, that the waters of a well in which that bone shall be washed, will anon be of such virtue, that there is no disease of cattle, 'of cow, or calf, or sheep, or ox,' that will not straightway be removed, by drinking from what has been so hallowed. Furthermore, if the owner of cattle will only be careful to drink himself of the water of that holy well before cockcrow, then he may be sure 'his beasts and his store will multiply.' And should he be disturbed by jealousy, should he have never such knowledge of his wife's unfaithfulness, let him only mix his pottage with water from that well, 'and never shall he more his wife mistrust.' Let him sow his oats or wheat, and as he gives 'pence or groats,' so shall his produce be. Should there be in the church one who bears no good-will to traffickers of this order, care is taken to point him out, all but by



name, and to cast venom upon him, where there can be no 'debate.' Satirists were hard to deal with; fools and the flagitious were more available. Offenders, too well known to the parish priest to be readily absolved from the guilt of their ill-doing, fared more lightly at the hands of those intruders. Men or women who had done such deeds that for shame they dared not go for confession to their own clerk, were invited to come to one more considerate of human infirmity—and of the man obeying, the miscreant says,

'And I assoil him by the authority,  
Which that by bull granted was to me?'

This picture may help to prevent the reader from being surprised at the severity of the tone in which Wycliffe denounces this sort of men—insisting, as he did, in the root-and-branch fashion, on the extinction of such orders, as a measure strictly necessary, if the people were to be protected against such fraudulence.

Wood says that Wycliffe began his controversy with the mendicants in 1360. But the historian does not give his authority for this statement. It is not improbable, however, that the antiquary had some ground for this conclusion, and that it would have been stated, had the fact itself appeared to him of sufficient importance to require that he should produce it. We have no direct evidence, however, in the extant writings of Wycliffe, to show that he committed himself to this discussion at that

precise time. His treatise intituled 'Objections to Friars' which has been printed, contains decisive evidence of having been written many years later. But from what we know of the controversy as conducted by others, and from all that we find bearing upon it in the later works of the reformer, it is not difficult to judge with sufficient accuracy of the manner in which he acquitted himself in relation to it at this earlier period. The treatise mentioned above, gives his views on this topic precisely as they are given, in more or less detached portions, throughout his writings, and no doubt in substance, and very much in expression, as they were given by him from the first. The following extract presents the first section or chapter of this treatise, and may be taken as suggestive of the general nature of the remaining sections, which are fifty in number.

' First, friars say that their religion, founded of sinful  
' men, is more perfect than that religion or order which  
' Christ himself made, that is both God and man. For  
' they say, that each bishop and priest may lawfully  
' leave their first dignity, and after be a friar ; but when  
' he is once a friar, he may in no manner leave that, and  
' live as a bishop, or a priest, by the form of the gospel.  
' But this heresy says that Christ lacked wit, might, or  
' charity, to teach apostles and his disciples the best  
' religion. But what man may suffer this foul heresy  
' to be put on Jesus Christ ? Christian men say, that  
' the religion and order that Christ made for his disciples

‘ and priests is most perfect, most easy, and most siker  
‘ [true]. Most perfect for this reason, for the patron or  
‘ founder thereof is most perfect, for he is very God and  
‘ very man, that of most wit, and most charity, gave this  
‘ religion to his dear worth friends. Also the rule thereof  
‘ is most perfect, since the gospel in his (its) freedom, with-  
‘ out error of man, is rule of this religion. Also knights of  
‘ this religion be most holy, and most perfect. For Jesus  
‘ Christ and his apostles be chief knights thereof, and  
‘ after them holy martyrs and confessors. It is most easy  
‘ and light ; for Christ himself says that “ *his yoke is*  
‘ *soft, and his charge is light,*” since it stands all in love  
‘ and freedom of heart, and bids nothing but reasonable  
‘ things, and profitable for the keeper thereof. It is most  
‘ siker [true] ; for it is confirmed of God, and not of  
‘ sinful men, and no man may destroy it, or dispense  
‘ there against ; but if the Pope, or any man, shall be  
‘ saved, he must confirmed be thereby, and else he shall  
‘ be damned. But men say, that other new orders and  
‘ rules be nought worth but if they be confirmed of the  
‘ Pope and other sinful men—and then they be not worth  
‘ but if they be confirmed of the devil, and in case the  
‘ Pope shall be damned, for then he is a devil, as the  
‘ gospel says of *Judas* ; and thus men say, that Christ’s  
‘ religion, in his (its) own cleanness and freedom, is more  
‘ perfect than any sinful man’s religion, by as much as  
‘ Christ is more perfect than is any sinful man. And if  
‘ new religions say, that they keep all that Christ’s reli-



‘gion bids, they spare the soth, [truth], for they lack the  
‘freedom and measure of Christ’s religion, and be bound  
‘to errors of sinful man, and thereby be letted [hindered  
‘or prevented] to profit to Christian men’s souls, and not  
‘suffered to teach freely God’s law, nor keep it in them-  
‘selves. For by the first and most [greatest] command-  
‘ment of God, they be holden *to love God of all their heart,*  
‘*and all their life, of all their mind, and all their strength,*  
‘*and their neighbours as themselves*; but who may do  
‘more than this?—then may no man keep more than  
‘Christ’s religion bids. And so if this new religion of  
‘friars be more perfect than Christ’s religion, then, if  
‘friars keep well this religion, they be more perfect than  
‘Christ’s apostles, and else they be apostles; and if men  
‘be apostles, they leave the better order, and take  
‘another less perfect. And the order of Christ in his  
‘(its) cleanness and freedom is most perfect, and so it  
‘seems that all these friars be apostates.’

It will be seen that this reasoning embodies the great Protestant principle concerning the sufficiency of holy scripture, and, carried out, must be fatal to everything ecclesiastical that has no better foundation than tradition. The man who maintained that the orders instituted by St. Dominic or St. Francis were more truly ‘religious’ than the ministry of the church as instituted by Christ, or than the Christian life generally, as set forth in the teaching and example of Christ, was a man, in the view of Wycliffe, who charged our blessed Lord as wanting ‘in

wit, might, or charity,' and to do this was not to *amend* the religion of Christ, but to *desert* it, and so to become 'apostates.' He proceeds, in subsequent chapters, to censure the friars as claiming the largest licence for themselves as preachers, but as subjecting all other men, however pious or gifted, to severe restrictions in this respect; denouncing them as apostate and accursed, should they dare to give themselves to such labours without a special sanction,—and sending them to prisons with criminals and outlaws. But, for his own part, he would not retaliate on these men—he would fain 'destroy their errors and save their persons,' and in this manner would aim 'to bring them to that living that Christ ordained priests to live in.' Concerning the hindrance thus given to the 'liberty of prophesying,' he further writes—'Since God's law saith, that he is out of 'charity that helps not his brother with bodily alms, if 'he may be in need; much more is he out of charity 'that helps not his brother's soul with teaching of God's 'law when he sees him run to hell by ignorance. And 'thus to magnify and maintain their rotten sects, they 'force a man by hypocrisy, false teaching, and strong 'pains, to break God's commandments and falsify charity. 'Out on this false heresy, and tyranny of Antichrist, 'that men be needed strongly to keep his laws more, and 'obey more to them, than to Christ's commandments, 'ever rightful!' He complains heavily of the base arts used by the friars to seduce the young into their fellow-

ship ; of the impossible things to which they bind the neophyte on his becoming such ; of the unalterableness of their vows, in the case of men who find that they have not, from God or nature, the power to be obedient to them ; and of their making it a great virtue that they trust to ' begging ' for their subsistence, while the denunciation of such mendicancy in the writings both of the Old and New Testaments, and in a multitude of fathers and ecclesiastical writers, are so manifold and notorious. He further describes them as enriching themselves, through this custom, at the cost of robbing the poor ; as converting the priestly functions which they had assumed, on the ground of ' privilege ' granted them to that effect by the court of Rome, to the most sordid uses ; and as being, in short, a main-spring of discord and disorder throughout the ecclesiastical system, the flatterers of men in power, whenever their selfish ends might be served by such a policy ; and the great corrupters of the morals of the people, as the natural consequence of their practice in vending pardons among them for all sorts of offences, as men court purchasers for articles of a common merchandize.

It will be seen from what has preceded, that in all this Wycliffe did not, strictly speaking, break new ground. Learned men in Paris, and Grosstete and Armachanus in England, had expressed themselves, on many of these points, to much the same effect. Nevertheless, the controversy as carried on by Wycliffe possesses a special



interest, partly as having been sustained without intermission for more than twenty years ; and still more, as based, in his hands, on a more constant and weighty—we may say a more *Protestant* reference, to the authority of Scripture ; and as having contributed much towards eliciting and developing those great principles and truths which have since become familiar to all Reformed and Protestant churches. In its breadth and spirit, as giving utterance, not in the terms familiar to us, but in substance and effect, to the two cardinal doctrines—the Supremacy and Sufficiency of Scripture, and the Right of Private Judgment, it was characteristic of the man, and its results have their place among the most memorable facts in modern history.



## CHAPTER V.

### WYCLIFFE ON THE POWERS OF CHURCH AND STATE.

**I**N taking such ground towards the Religious Orders, it became the reformer to lay his account with being no favourite at the papal court, or with the more zealous partizans of that power in this country. Hitherto, he could not be charged with having avowed any heretical doctrine. But the vigour of his attack on the forces which the Papacy had taken under its special protection, and which, in return, were so much devoted to its interests, took the natural consequences along with it. His next controversy had reference more directly to the pretensions of the popes, and shows the light in which he had come to look generally upon the hierarchy of those times, and upon its relation to the civil power.

The partition of power between the magistrate and the priest is an old matter of debate,—old as the origin of

society, and it will last, no doubt, as long as society shall last. In the history of the Christian Church, controversy on this topic has been very conspicuous. During three centuries Christianity sustained itself, not only without aid from the magistrate, but so as to become strong in the face of every sort of hostility from that quarter. During that interval, many of the churches in the different provinces of the Roman Empire, became strong as separate and independent organizations, and the ministers of those churches, having been a distinct order from the beginning, became well-known as such. Religion is personal—in the sense of the mystic it is wholly of that nature. But it is not hazardous to say, that, rightly viewed, it is not so much personal as relative. It has *relation* both to the nature of God, and to the nature of man. From these sources it must deduce its doctrines. In this manner it has to do with truth which is not confined to self, but which is universal, and of universal interest. These doctrines, moreover, show what the individual should be, and what he should do, in relation to God as thus known, and to man as thus known. In this manner religion has to do with laws no less than with doctrines, and with laws which are not confined to the individual, but are of universal obligation. It is not in the nature of religion, accordingly, that it should terminate in the personal. It has a relativeness to all being—the created and the Uncreated. The secular, in the history of man, *must* be based on the religious, and the religious



*will* be inclusive of the secular. The difficulty of separating between these, comes from the manner in which they imply or include each other from their very nature. Religion comes from relativeness, and it has to do with all relativeness. Of the Christian religion this is manifestly true. Hence its development in the form of social life is inevitable. It tends to nourish sympathy, to necessitate organization, and organization supposes law, the administration of law, and the forms and authorities of an outward nature necessary to such ends. It is true, the laws of the early Christians were without any sanction from magistracy ;—but they were not the less laws, nor in reality the less potent on that account. Even in civil governments, more is done by appeals to moral motive, than by means of coercion. The latter appliance is always at hand, but it is as a last resort in extreme cases. The ends of religion being purely moral, its motives must be of that nature ; but its moral sanctions come with no mean weight on the mind of its votaries. Under such influences the early churches became so many spiritual commonwealths, well organized, and possessing their well-appointed officers, long before the civil power professed to take them under its patronage.

The sort of alliance between the church and the state which took place under Constantine, did not greatly affect these antecedent arrangements. The assemblies of the Christians remained much as they had been, and those who ministered in such assemblies continued to do

so as heretofore, only in some cases with higher titles, and in greater pomp. While the civil power was regarded as hostile to the church, its members, in obedience to the injunction of the apostles, adjusted their differences about secular things, for the most part, among themselves, their brethren being required to arbitrate in such matters.<sup>1</sup> Such a custom, once established, could not be easily disturbed; and Constantine and his successors aimed to regulate, rather than to abolish it. Hence, during the decline of the Empire, it was found that while all the other elements of the social system were sinking into decay, the church was not only governed by laws of her own, but possessed a life of her own, and, amidst the general weakness, seemed to grow strong. Such was the effect of the voluntary action, and of the exercises in the way of self-government, in which the church had been so long nurtured. From these causes, the churches of the East and West came into connection with the state in a condition which fitted them for availing themselves of its patronage, without sharing more than partially in its weakness.

It was a circumstance highly favourable to the power of the clergy, that while a distinct order, they never became a caste. No man became a priest by hereditary right. On the contrary, that office was accessible to all, even to the lowest; and the popular suffrage had much to do,

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<sup>1</sup> Ep. 1 Cor. c. VI.

either directly or indirectly, with choosing the men who should be raised to that trust. In the early ages, the suffrage of the people in such cases took precedence of the suffrage of the clergy. Even when we come far into the middle age, we find the Abbots elected by the monks, the Bishops elected by the inferior clergy, and the Popes themselves dependant on the suffrages of the priesthood in their own city. In the end, the people, as the source of authority, were gradually thrust aside by the inferior clergy; and the inferior clergy, in their turn, were precluded, by a sort of compromise between the higher clergy and the civil power.

It was natural when power was made to emanate in this manner from the privileged, to the exclusion of the unprivileged—from the authorities, to the exclusion of those subject to authority, that the course taken should be one dangerous to individual and general liberty. The pretence to infallibility, and the use of coercion in support of it, were the results to be expected from such a change. But the law of force in the hands of the magistrate had respect to actions only, while in the hands of a priesthood it had respect to opinion. In such a warfare, however, it was not possible that the church should prevail more than partially. While professing to ignore the reason of her children, shew as ever making large appeals to it. No human government in that age was carried on by means of so much discussion, and such a constant showing of reasons for what was done. It was clear the



church had taken ground she could retain only in part ; and the effect of her antagonism to freedom of opinion, though bad enough, was by no means so bad as her dogma of infallibility, and her maxims of persecution, seemed to foreshadow.

It was only by laying claim to separateness and independence, as being a purely spiritual power, that the hierarchy could at all keep its footing in the face of the barbarian nations which over-ran the Roman Empire. But to draw the line between the spiritual and the secular in the feudal times that followed was by no means easy. Inasmuch as the church was the divinely-appointed interpreter of the difference between truth and error, and between right and wrong, there was no question within the range of human duty on which the head of the church might not claim to be the only authority competent to an unerring judgment. Hence the decretals of the pontiffs were opposed, without hesitancy, to the edicts of kings ; and the maxims of the canon law, or the judgment of councils, to the decisions of the highest lay authority. On such grounds, it was demanded, that clergymen who became offenders against the laws of society, should not be amenable to the civil authority, in the manner of other criminals, but that they should be tried by ecclesiastical judges ; that the crown should abstain from any meddling with the property of the church, the same being sacred, and wholly beyond the province of the magistrate, except to protect it from injury ; that in the election of

prelates, the collation to benefices, and the government of the universities, deference should be shown, according to usage, to the successor of St. Peter, as the centre of ecclesiastical unity ; and in case of obstinate disobedience to the will of the representative of the prince of the Apostles, the pontiff could declare crowns a forfeiture ; could absolve subjects from their oaths of allegiance ; and to enforce such decisions, could lay provinces and nations under an interdict ;—a sentence which left all conditions of people without the consolations of religion, by causing the churches to be closed, and the functions of the priesthood to be suspended.

The history of the middle age, furnishes evidence more than enough, of the success with which the popes could thus arm the superstitions of the people against the will of their rulers. Salvation came only through the sacraments of the church ; those sacraments could not be administered by lay hands ; and, in consequence, not only the multitude, but persons of sensitive religious feeling in all ranks, soon manifested an eagerness, in those seasons of interdict, to obtain the services of the priesthood at almost any cost. In this manner, a power claiming to be accounted as simply spiritual, could meddle with all things temporal. It is not to be supposed, that in these struggles between the ecclesiastical and the civil authorities, justice was always found on one side. But the evil was, that while society might see the papal interference put forth on the side of justice to-day, it possessed no

security against seeing it appealed to, with no less success, in favour of the grossest injustice to-morrow.

In England, the pretensions of the papacy may be said to have reached their climax under the pontificate of Innocent III., when John, to shield himself against the merited disaffection of his subjects, consented to hold his crown as a fief of the see of Rome, and to pay to that see the annual sum of one thousand marks, in acknowledgment of his dependance. ‘He swore that he would be faithful to God, to the blessed Peter, to the Roman church, to Pope Innocent, and to Innocent’s rightful successors; that he would not by word, or deed, or assent, abet their enemies to the loss of life, or limb, or liberty; that he would keep their counsel, and never reveal it to their injury; and that he would aid them to the best of his power, to preserve and defend against all men, the patrimony of St. Peter, and especially the two kingdoms of England and Ireland.’ This is the account of the royal oath, on this memorable occasion, given by an author always sufficiently disposed to vindicate the acts of the Roman priesthood, or to present them in softened colours when of a nature not to admit of justification.<sup>1</sup> In return for this homage, the monarch was assured that all the means of protection which the spiritual arms, and the general influence of the papacy could supply, would be laid under contribution, as occasion should demand,

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<sup>1</sup> Lingard’s Hist. III. 40.



to uphold him in all his rights and possessions. This was in the year 1213.

In the following year, the English barons, in defiance of every sort of prohibition from the pontiff, extorted Magna Charta from the King at Runnymede. The next year, Innocent, in compliance with the wishes of John and his council, annulled the charter—partly, as he declared, because it had been extorted by violence, partly because the king had taken upon him the vows of a crusader, and should have been secured against such encroachments on that ground; and lastly, because England had become ‘the fief of the holy see: and they could not be ignorant that if the king had the will, he had not at least the power, to give away the rights of the crown, without the consent of his feudal superior.’ But the Barons were not to be either flattered or menaced into a surrender of the liberties they had gained. Innocent excommunicated them by name, and laid the city of London under an interdict. But it availed nothing. The Pope, it was argued, had acted under false suggestions, and in the whole proceeding had meddled with affairs beyond his province. ‘He had no right to interfere in temporal concerns; the control of ecclesiastical matters only had been entrusted by Christ to St. Peter, and St. Peter’s successors.’<sup>1</sup>

John died two years later. From such a tone of

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<sup>1</sup> Lingard, III. 78. *et seq.*

resistance, we might have expected that nothing more would have been heard of the English kings as being vassals to the see of Rome; and that nothing would be further from the thoughts of John's successors, than the payment of the promised thousand marks a year. But such was not the fact. To soothe the resentment of the Popes, or to secure assistances of various kinds from them, the payment was sometimes made; but it was with little regularity, and long intermissions. Edward the Third, on ceasing to be a minor, discontinued the odious tribute; but in 1365, thirty-three years later, it was demanded anew by Pope Urban, who insisted that the arrears for that number of years should be paid; and in default of such payment, Edward was required to appear in the presence of the pontiff, to answer for such neglect, as to his feudal lord.<sup>1</sup>

In this instance, as in many more, the infallible head of an infallible church did a very foolish thing. Just a century and a half had now passed, since John made his first payment of this thousand marks. England had not been stationary during that interval. The recent victo-

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. I. 220. Cotton's Abridgment, 102. Barnes (Hist. Edward III. B. iii. c. 12.) has questioned whether this tribute was paid by any sovereign after John. It appears, however, from certain notices in Rymer, that payments were made at intervals, until the close of the minority of Edward III: Tom. II. 5. Edw. I. Dec. 18. 6 Edw. I. Feb. 13. 16 Edw. I. Ap. 28. 29 Edw. I. March 18. Tom. IV. 4 Edw. III. April 28.

ries of Cressy and Poitiers had greatly raised the military fame of our ancestors ; and the peace of Bretigni had secured to Edward all that could be reasonably expected, as the fruit of his incursions upon France. It was a full century, moreover, since the country had seen its first duly constituted parliament, consisting, not only of the prelates and barons, but including representatives from the counties, cities, and boroughs. Many times had the Great Charter been confirmed anew, in obedience to the call of a people jealous of the liberties which that document secured to them ; and through each succeeding reign, the suffrages of the commons became more and more necessary to everything done in parliament, and especially to all measures relating to taxation. During the reign of Edward the Third, which extended to fifty years, more than seventy parliaments were convened—the house of commons being assembled by a new election in each instance. More than once, too, it was enacted, that at least one such assembly should be convened every year.

When the pontiff revived his claim to this tribute, the king at once submitted the question to the decision of parliament. The prelates, in answer to the communication of the chancellor on the subject, solicited a day for private deliberation ; but assembling on the morrow, the lords, spiritual and temporal, and the representatives of the commons, were unanimous in stating, that neither king John, nor any other sovereign, had power to subject the



realm of England to a foreign authority after this manner, without consent of parliament; that this consent had not been obtained; and that, passing over other grounds of exception, the whole transaction on the part of the monarch, was in violation of the oath which he had taken on receiving the crown. By the temporal nobility, and the popular representatives, it was further declared, that should the pontiff commence his threatened process against the king of England, the strength and resources of the nation should be placed at the disposal of the sovereign for the defence of his crown and dignity.<sup>1</sup> Had Urban been wise in his estimate of circumstances, he would have seen this result as probable. But his wisdom came too late for his advantage. His successors were careful not to be imitators of his temerity, and the claim died gradually out of men's thoughts.

But if the pontiff himself submitted to this decision with a prudent silence, some of his more zealous adherents were by no means disposed to look on his case as desperate. An anonymous monk published a tract in defence of the claim so strongly repudiated by the parliament, and challenged Wycliffe by name, to answer the argument which he set forth in its favour. We have seen, that, a little before this time, the reformer had signalized himself by his controversy with the mendicants. This controversy, it would seem, he had conducted in

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. II. 289, 290.

such a manner, that no man could be in doubt as to the view he would take of such a dispute as had now arisen between the English parliament and the see of Rome. Wycliffe was now about forty years of age, and though he had not hitherto fallen under censure, as broaching heresies, or errors, of which cognizance could be legally taken by church or state, he had become distinguished among the men of his time, who, in any quarrel of this nature, would be sure to contend for the independence and supremacy of the civil power. Wycliffe speaks of himself, moreover, at this time, as being, not only 'a clerk under a king,' and as one, who, on that account, should be prepared to vindicate the authority proper to the sovereign; but as a clerk 'standing on a particular footing' in relation to the crown,—language which is understood as denoting that he had received the honorary distinction of royal chaplain. As such, he professes himself willing to become a respondent on the question at issue, 'and to defend and maintain, that the sovereign 'may justly rule in this kingdom of England, though 'denying tribute to the Roman Pontiff.'<sup>1</sup>

Before proceeding to discuss the question of this tribute, there are two preliminary points nearly related to it, on which the monk expresses his opinion, and to which the reformer briefly replies. One of these questions has respect to the authority of the magistrate, with

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix F.

regard to the temporal possessions of the churchmen ; the other to his authority in reference to the persons of such men. Our disputatious monk is described by Wycliffe as affirming, that the state may not, under any circumstance, deprive ecclesiastics of their lands or revenues ; ‘ the goods of the church,’ being placed beyond the power of ‘ secular lords,’ both by the gospel, and by all law that can be binding on the human conscience. Wycliffe does not deny that in some cases churchmen may have been deprived of their temporalities unjustly ; but he contends that in all cases where such ‘ goods ’ are clearly misapplied, it belongs to the king, of whom all lands must be holden, to see that they are rightly administered. Our kings, he says, have dealt with such possessions in this manner before ; it may become them to deal with them in such manner again. For the *persons* of ecclesiastics, the monk demands the same independence of all state authority, insisting that ‘ in no case can it be lawful that an ecclesiastic should be made to appear before ‘ a secular judge.’ Wycliffe, on the contrary, maintains, that in all civil cases, the civil courts should be supreme alike over clergy and laity. That priests should be guilty of theft, homicide, treason, and not be accountable to the magistrate for such offences, was a notion little to the mind of the reformer, as a man or a patriot. The goods of the church were, in a large sense, the goods of the state ; and the persons of ecclesiastics were, in all civil matters, the subjects of the state. ‘ But our doctor and



‘ his brethren,’ says Wycliffe, ‘ demand of me, with excessive urgency, and no small heat and arrogance, that I should answer his arguments in the form in which he has put them, being especially observant of the form and matter of the statement made by him in favour of the Pope, and against the right of our lord the king. Every dominion, he says, presented on condition, comes to an end, on the failure of that condition. Our Lord, the Pope, then, presented our king with the kingdom of England, on condition that England should pay so much annually to the Roman See : now this condition, in process of time, has not been fulfilled, and the king, in consequence, has lost long ago all rightful dominion in England.’ The reformer expresses himself as greatly surprised that the men who manifestly care so little about his judgment in this case, or about any judgment contrary to their own, should betray so much anxiety to force him into a public avowal of his opinion concerning it. ‘ Three causes, however,’ he writes, ‘ have been mentioned to me as disposing my opponent to this course— first, that being aspersed on this account before the Roman See, I might be deprived of my ecclesiastical benefices, and be subjected to heavy censures ; second, that, as the consequence, the favour of the papal court might be extended to himself and his brethren ; and thirdly, that our Lord the Pope, being allowed to rule in this kingdom with less restriction, more imperiously and more voluptuously, free from all brotherly restraint,

‘—civil dominion, and great wealth, may be accumulated by Abbots, to the great detriment of the revenue of the kingdom. But as a lowly and obedient son of the Roman church, I protest that I desire to assert nothing that may appear unjust towards the said Church, or that may reasonably offend pious ears.’

These last words are important, as showing that up to this time the purpose of Wycliffe did not extend beyond a reasonable purification of the existing system;—a separation from the church of Rome, and antagonism to it in our later Protestant sense, was not in his thoughts. He was a liberal Romanist, intent on curbing the arrogance of the great ecclesiastics of his time, and zealous for the correction of abuses generally; but he was still ‘a lowly and obedient son of the Roman Church.’ Already, indeed, the doctrines avowed by him were such as could not be acted upon fully without placing him at issue with the maxims on which the existing hierarchy had been founded. But as in the case of Luther, our reformer was to become aware of the breadth and force of his earlier principles, only by slow degrees.

In proceeding to meet the argument of his opponent, concerning the tribute as before stated, Wycliffe chose to avail himself of the reasonings of men whose high station might suffice to protect him against the probable consequences of giving utterance to so much freedom of thought on his own responsibility. How the reformer became acquainted with the debate which took place in the

upper house of Parliament when the question was submitted by the king, we know not. He has, however, transmitted to us a summary of the speeches made on that occasion. The document supplying this information is interesting, as indicating the character of the debates which took place in the House of Lords, on a field-day in the fourteenth century, as well as on account of the direct evidence which it furnishes as to the intelligence and independence with which ecclesiastical questions were canvassed in that assembly. 'I ask my reverend 'doctor,' says Wycliffe, 'to refute, if he can, what I have 'heard has been delivered on this subject in a certain 'council of secular lords.'

The first lord, who is described as more bold in arms than in speech, maintains, that the means necessary to institute and uphold civil dominion are coercive—that the Pope, if he be possessed of the proper means wherewith to conquer this country, taking it by the sword from those who of old became possessed of it by the sword, he is at full liberty to resort to these weapons, and should he so do, England will no doubt be found prepared, in defence of her right, to do the same. The second lord argues, that the Pope is forbidden by the gospel to be concerned in matters of temporal dominion; that, as a purely spiritual person, it is foreign to his office that he should exact secular tribute after the manner of a feudal prince, 'for the Pope ought to be the chief follower of 'Christ, but Christ himself was unwilling to become



‘ a ruler in civil matters, and in consequence the Pope  
‘ should not so be. For in Matt. viii. when the covetous  
‘ man having worldly greatness in his thoughts, promised  
‘ to follow Christ, he replied to the thoughts of that man,  
‘ saying, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air  
‘ have nests, but the Son of man has no where to recline  
‘ his head,”—as if he had said, “Do not think that I  
‘ will teach you to work miraculous cures that you may  
‘ acquire a civil dominion by the gains you thus realize,  
‘ while neither myself nor my disciples desire such things  
‘ in this world.” While, therefore, it behoves us to re-  
‘ quire that the pope should be observant of his religious  
‘ obligations after this pattern, it is clear that we are  
‘ bound to resist him in this exaction of a condition  
‘ which cannot be proper to him, as being purely civil.’

The third lord argues that the payment of tribute is always on the ground of service supposed to be received. The question, accordingly, is, what service has England received from the person who bears the title of ‘ the servant of the servants of God.’ The speaker insists that harm, and not good, has come to England through its relation to the papacy; that the pontiff and his agents have seized largely upon its wealth, which has often passed, along with a betrayal of its secrets, into the hands of its enemies:—‘ Sufficient experience truly have  
‘ we had as to the failure of pope or cardinals to serve  
‘ us either in body or soul.’ This speaker touches on the absurdity of supposing two headships in civil affairs over

the same state ; and deems it a much easier thing to shew that the pope has forfeited his right to ecclesiastical supremacy, than to make it appear that the king has forfeited his right to his civil sovereignty.

The next speaker mentioned, is disposed to think that John could never have been a party to a compact so mean, foolish, and dishonest as that which is imputed to him. He may have paid a thousand marks for the removal of the interdict, under which the kingdom then lay, but he could not have expected it to be a perpetual tribute. But admitting the case to be as stated by the adherents of the pope, it follows, that he obtained the good kingdom of England, in return for certain spiritual services, and in this view the transaction becomes grossly simoniacal, consisting in the discharge of a spiritual office purely for the sake of the temporalities to be obtained in return. On this ground, accordingly, if on no other, reason and piety must suggest that the claim put forth should be resisted. 'It savours not,' he adds, 'of the religion of Christ, for a pope to say, I will absolve thee, on condition that I receive annually so much money ! I hold it to be lawful to break a dishonest treaty made with one who, by such conduct, has broken his faith with Christ.' If John sinned, John should bear the penalty, not the poor commonalty of England, who were no parties to his deeds. In short, to admit this claim of the pope, would be to admit the right of the pontiff to transfer this whole

country from the hands of the king to other hands purely at his pleasure.

The lord described as the sixth speaker reasons thus :  
' It appears to me that, as the third lord hath said, this  
' action of the pope may be retorted on his own head ; for  
' if the pope did really present our king with the kingdom  
' of England, as he in so many words pretends, and in so  
' doing did not give away that which was not his own to  
' give, he must then have been the true holder of this  
' kingdom ; and inasmuch as it is not lawful for any man  
' to alienate the goods of the church without a reasonable  
' equivalent for them, it is clear to me that it was not in  
' the power of the pope to alienate this fertile kingdom of  
' England for so small a yearly payment.' For if he might  
' so do, then he might alienate the lands of the church to  
' any extent, and for returns never so inadequate, a course  
' of proceeding that would soon be felt somewhat inconvenient.' The speaker is content to leave the pontiff on either horn of this dilemma. England did become a fief of the papacy, or it did not ;—if it did not, then all pretension to a tribute is fraudulent ; if it did, then such an alienation of the goods of the church is a delinquency which the church should be prepared to visit with her heaviest censure. This speaker further says, that Jesus Christ is the chief proprietor of all things in this world ; that he will fail in nothing in respect to those who hold their property from him, and in obedience to his will ; while the pope is not only liable to sin, but even to mor-



tal sin, and in such case 'according to divines, loses all right to dominion of any kind.'

The last speaker reiterated the argument, that it was not in the power of the king and the few corrupt nobles who acted with him, to place the kingdom in such a relation to the papacy; that to the validity of such a transaction the consent of the kingdom was indispensable; and that inasmuch as that consent was not obtained, the pretension of the pope is manifestly without foundation.<sup>1</sup>

It is with no small interest that we listen to these high-minded nobles, as they thus oppose the language of an enlightened patriotism, to the encroachments of a sacerdotal avarice and ambition. Wycliffe directs the attention of the writer who had assailed him, to 'the principles thus laid down by the sagacity of these lords,' as furnishing a sufficient answer both to the matter and form of his argument. But though the proper effect of this reasoning upon his opponent would certainly be an acknowledgment of his error, and also of the justice of the course taken by the king, the reformer intimates that he has no expectation of seeing anything of that nature result from it. When all exaction shall have come to an end;—then, and not till then, may such men be expected

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. II. 289, 290. Cotton's Abridgment, 102, 103. Collier's Eccles. Hist., I. 560. For similar instances of resistance to papal encroachment at an earlier date, see Matthew of Westminster, Ann. 1244. Walsingham Hypodrigma Neustr. Ann. 1245.

to look on such questions in a reasonable and honest temper.<sup>1</sup>

The parliament which taught the court of Rome to relinquish the fond imagination of exercising the authority of a feudal superior over the king of England, took the controversy between the mendicants and the universities under review. The charges preferred against the friars had respect, as heretofore, to their zeal in making proselytes among the young; and to the readiness always evinced by them to favour the encroachments of the see of Rome, to the great detriment of the universities and of the nation. The disputes of this nature which had grown up in the universities, had led to much disorder and scandal, and both parties were admonished by the parliament to conduct themselves towards each other with greater moderation and courtesy. But the two houses did not content themselves with mere advice. It was enacted that no student under the age of eighteen should be received into any mendicant order; that all disputes in time to come, between the mendicants and the universities, should be decided in the court of the king, without further appeal; and that no bull from the pope, tending in any way to the injury of the universities, should be hereafter received. Thus, even in catholic times, the licence assumed by the pontiffs, to meddle with the course of our affairs, by sending their rescripts to be proclaimed among

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<sup>1</sup> See this document in the Appendix F.

us at their pleasure, was deemed inconsistent with our proper liberties and independence as a people, and checked accordingly by force of law.

We do not learn by any direct evidence, that Wycliffe was a party immediately engaged in calling the attention of the parliament of 1366, to these alleged delinquencies of the friars. But it should be remembered, that by this time the reformer had become more conspicuous than any other man in Oxford as the antagonist of these religionists; and further, that he had the means of knowing very intimately, as we have seen in his report of the discussion on the question of the tribute-money, all that took place in the parliament of that year. These facts suggest, that had we been among the parties having business with that assembly, among those passing to and fro about its place of meeting, we should probably have seen John de Wycliffe, the sharp and resolute disputant from Oxford—the man to become known in his time as the great precursor of a reformation in religion that should extend to the one-half of Christendom, and which would exert a powerful indirect influence over the other half.

It is important, also, to bear in mind at this point, that during these proceedings, the suit of Wycliffe, in relation to his wardenship, was still pending in the court of the Pontiff. This fact was not allowed to deter him from the loyal and patriotic course taken by him, on the matter of the tribute claimed by the Pope; nor can we suppose that it was allowed at all to affect his conduct



as a man zealous for the independence of the universities, and no less zealous in his opposition to the mendicants as the most dangerous enemies to that independence. We repeat, therefore, that the issue of that suit may have added somewhat to the zeal of Wycliffe as a reformer; but his feeling in that direction—the feeling, which at length made him all that he is in history, had become strong, and had been freely expressed, long before.<sup>1</sup> The parliament itself participated so far in this feeling, as to resolve, not only to repudiate the king John tribute, but to put an end to the much older and more harmless contribution called Peter's-pence—a payment said to have been originally made by every householder, with chattels of a certain value, towards the relief of the English pilgrims in Rome. It originated in Anglo-Saxon times, and was soon reduced to a fixed sum, which remained the same amidst the subsequent changes in the value of money, and in the number and wealth of the population. It did not exceed some £200 a year.<sup>2</sup>

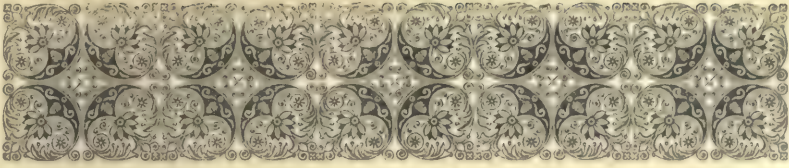
This chapter does not set forth all the enlightened thought to which Wycliffe attained, concerning the distinct provinces of state-power and church-power. But

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Wood grows vehement in asserting that the zeal of Wycliffe, as a Reformer, owed its origin to the loss of his wardenship and 'nothing else;' and even Foxe (*Acts and Mon.* I. 557.) and Mosheim (*Hist.* III. 332.) are among the writers who have not dealt with this insinuation as they ought.

<sup>2</sup> Rot. Parl. I. 220. Lingard, *Hist.* III. 196.

the germs of his ultimate opinions on these vexed questions, are very perceptible in the facts and reasonings which have now been submitted to the reader. In all civil matters, the civil power, in the view of the reformer, was entitled to be supreme. Territorial rights, and the rights of property in every form, began and ended there. No plea of religion, no appeal to the decretals or canons of the church, could be admitted, as affecting the persons or properties of men, in any way contrary to the will and power of the crown. Pontiffs and councils might deliver their spiritual admonitions on purely spiritual subjects, but the crown of England owed no civil allegiance to the papacy; and as it was with the crown of England in this respect, so was it with its people. So far the mind of Wycliffe had advanced in 1366, in the forty-second year of his age. Princes and peoples were not to be slaves to the priestly authority, in any of the relations or affairs of this world; and as to the world to come, they were not to suppose that their interests there were placed by any means so fully in the hands of the priesthood, as priests were disposed to assume. Where so much light had come, more would follow.



## CHAPTER VI.

### WYCLIFFE AND ENGLISH ROMANISM.



IN the last chapter, we have seen something of the comparatively free spirit which animated our English Romanism, in the fourteenth century. But we must look further in this direction, if we would place ourselves in the actual circumstances of our first reformer. The sickly ultramontane doctrines avowed by not a few among us at this day, found small favour in the eyes of our sagacious and stout-hearted fathers more than four centuries since. To judge of the course of Wycliffe with intelligence, it behoves us to look to those tendencies of his age which were in his favour, no less than to those the strength of which was against him.

Edward the Third was proclaimed king when scarcely fourteen years of age. His father had exposed himself to the disaffection of his subjects, by his weakness, and



his vices, and still more, perhaps, by the national misfortunes which had resulted from them. He was deposed and murdered. But, whoever might have been to blame in those proceedings, it was felt that the young king was not open to censure on account of them. Edward soon gave signs of possessing military genius, and a capacity for government—qualities, which in the long disordered state of the kingdom, were of eminent value in the sovereign. But during the former half of his long reign, he found his schemes of conquest—which were his great schemes—productive of little else than mortification and embarrassment. No real advantage followed from his hostilities with Scotland: and his attempts to seize the crown of France, which diverted his attention so greatly from the real interests of his own people, exposed him, for a considerable interval, to much care and disaster abroad, and to murmurings from a neglected and impoverished people at home. It is true, in 1346, some twenty years after the king's accession, the states of Europe were astonished by the reports which reached them concerning the battle of Cressy. A victory which the skill of a few leaders, and the space of a single hour, sufficed to determine, greatly increased the military ardour of the English court, and of the nation at large; and produced an impression on the relations of Christendom, the effects of which were perceptible for centuries. Edward's ill-supported claim to the crown of France, had called forth the haughty resentment of that

formidable kingdom, and the disasters of his earlier campaigns in the hostile territory, had wounded his own pride, and that of his subjects. But the battle of Cressy, and the victory at Poitiers which took place ten years later, placed the chivalry of France at the feet of England. The king of Scotland was a prisoner in the Tower of London, and the sovereign of France was now placed at the head of the illustrious captives in the train of Edward the Third. Thoughtful men might have foreseen that France, thus humbled, would be sure to harbour purposes of revenge, for many a generation to come; and that England would be so much intent on sustaining its pretensions in a foreign land, as to be comparatively unmindful of interests more properly its own:—but our ancestors appear to have lost sight of the probable mischiefs of this policy, in the splendour of its results as immediately before them.

Much evil followed from this cause, to England itself, and still more to some of the fairest provinces of France; but the evil, so far as we were ourselves concerned, was not without its admixture of good. By this custom of bearing arms together, our Norman and Saxon populations became more amalgamated, and less disposed to remember the cruel feuds which had done so much to keep them apart from the times of the Conquest. The sinews of war, moreover, could not be obtained in the age of Edward the Third, except in the form of supplies, voted by the Commons in parliament. The never-failing

exigencies of the king made it necessary that the representatives of the people should be constantly assembled, not only year by year, but sometimes more frequently ; thus sinking more and more deeply into the public mind, the maxim of Magna Charter—that the English nation should not be taxed without its consent ; and supplying abundant precedent for the wholesome rule, which, in our parliamentary history, has made a redress of the grievances of the subject, to take precedence of the grant of subsidies to the crown. In this instance, as in many more in our history, the necessities of the crown ministered largely to the liberties of the people.

Another effect, and one, perhaps, fully as important, grew out of this hostility between the two nations. At the opening of the present century, Philip the Fair, of France, in consequence of some passionate disagreements with the see of Rome, removed the court of the Pontiffs from Rome to Avignon ; and fixing the seat of the Pope in France, he succeeded in securing the office itself to a Frenchman. This exile of the Popes from Rome lasted seventy years, and in the language of the Italians, was the Babylonish captivity of the papacy. Clement V. ; John XXII. ; Benedict XII. ; Clement VI. ; Innocent VII. ; Urban V. ; and Gregory IX.—all succeeded each other during this interval, and all were Frenchmen. The Cardinals, moreover, as might be expected, were also mostly of that nation. Thus the papacy was virtually in the hands of France, while France had come to be regarded



as the natural enemy of England. The disaffections so deeply seated in the nation towards the French court, became, in this manner, inseparable from a jealousy of the court of the Pontiff: the assumption every where being, that the policy of the court of Avignon must always be favourable to that of the court in Paris. The wealth, moreover, which the agents of the papacy drew in so many ways from England, was regarded as passing, for the greater part, into the hands of aliens, who were at war with it; while the secrets of the state, with which these foreigners resident among us could not fail to become more or less acquainted, were said to be often betrayed by them to the enemy, to the great harm of the king and kingdom. Complaints to this effect came up, as we have seen, in the debate upon the tribute; and they were common everywhere during the latter half of this reign. We scarcely need say that this posture of affairs, and this feeling so natural to it, were eminently favourable to those who were zealous on the side of ecclesiastical reformation. Independently of which, these Avignon Popes are described by Mosheim as men, who, by a succession of mean and selfish contrivances, 'having no other end than the mere acquisition of riches, excited a general hatred against the Roman see, and thereby greatly weakened the Papal empire, which had been visibly on the decline from the time of Boniface.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eccles. Hist. III. 316—318.

But it is proper we should speak somewhat more definitely concerning these alleged encroachments and exactions of the Popes. The feeling thus called forth was the result of facts, and the facts were on the surface of history. We have seen both the nature and the end of the tribute, or census, imposed on king John, and also of the older and somewhat reasonable annual payment called Peter's-pence. Another, and a much larger source of income of the papacy, consisted in the payment of *first-fruits*. The small voluntary presents made by the priest to the Bishop who officiated at his ordination, or by the Bishop to the metropolitan to whom he was indebted for consecration, grew by slow degrees to be regarded as a right; and in the thirteenth century this claim was estimated at the value of the first year's income from the benefice. In England, however, this usage obtained only partially, and always by means of a 'provision' for the purpose, from the Pope. The power on the part of the prelates, to make such exactions from the inferior clergy, could not fail of being unpopular from its own nature, and still more on account of the source from which it was derived. In the language of the time, it was a coalition between the Pope and the prelates, to defraud both the patrons, and the more needy clergy, of their due. It was tantamount to the power to levy a fine on the renewal of a lease; the only difference being, that, in this case, the true lessor was thrust aside, to make room for a false one. It will not be deemed sur-

prising that the Popes should sometimes have shown reluctance in ceding this privilege to others ; nor that, at the same time, they should have been by no means slow in exercising it themselves. Clement V., one of the Avignon Popes, reserved to himself, on one occasion, the first-fruits of all the benefices in England that should become vacant during the next two years ; and John XXII., one of his successors, did the same, for the space of three years.

But by the 'provisions' of the papacy, we are to understand instruments which went much beyond this point. By such documents, the Popes appointed their creatures to benefices, according to their pleasure, without consulting either the king or the patron. This bolder encroachment on the rights of property, called forth, as we may suppose, still louder complaint. The Pope generally pleaded the exigencies of his exchequer, and always insisted that, upon the whole, he had been very discreet in the exercise of this part of the function belonging to him as the chief pastor. He found less resistance, moreover, in these proceedings, on the part of the crown, than might have been expected, from the fact that our kings, in those irregular times, were often themselves offenders in the same manner, providing for those dependant on them, in this way, by putting the rights of inferior patrons in abeyance at their pleasure.

But the abbacies, bishoprics, and archbishoprics were the prizes of the hierarchy, and in relation to them came



the great struggle between the popes and the sovereigns of Christendom. The king claimed to be the holder of the large temporalities attached to these offices ; and if the time came in which the pope insisted on the right to nominate to the spiritual function, the king never ceased to insist on his right to withhold the temporalities whenever the appointment should not be acceptable to him. For many centuries the popes were content with claiming a power to this effect in relation to archbishops only, leaving the confirmation of the elections made to ordinary bishoprics with the metropolitan. But a bishop might always appeal from his archbishop to the pope ; these appeals it was the interest of the papacy to encourage ; and, after a while, the meddling of the pontiffs with the affairs of nearly all bishoprics, ended in their claiming the right of issuing their ' provisions ' in reference to any see as it became vacant. The right of election, indeed, pertained, in such cases, to the chapters ; but there was as much unwillingness in the king as in the pope to cede to those bodies more than the semblance of such power ; and the quarrel between these two authorities, was about the division of a spoil that did not belong of right to either. Still, the people were easier to be reconciled to such undue exercises of power on the part of their kings, than on the part of a foreign court. In the reign of Edward I. while that monarch was absent as a crusader, the pope appointed an ecclesiastic, on his sole authority, to the vacant see of Canterbury.

The new archbishop was admitted, but not without a solemn protest in favour of the rights of the crown. Some five-and-twenty years later, in filling the see of Worcester, a more direct attempt was made to ignore the authority of the king in respect to the temporalities. But the prelate elect was subjected to a heavy fine, as the penalty of having acted on the authority of such a document; was obliged to renounce all the parts of the bull deemed inconsistent with loyalty; and from that time to the age of the reformation, every bishop received the temporalities of his see, in the prescribed terms, from the hands of the king.<sup>1</sup>

To carry on so extensive a traffic in ecclesiastical property, it became necessary that the pope should locate his officers through the whole kingdom. These persons were the medium of communication between the pontiff, and all parties appealing to his authority, or accounted as being in any way subject to it. As we have intimated,

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<sup>1</sup> About ten years before the birth of Wycliffe, Walter Reynolds was called to the primacy of the English church. On returning from Rome, where his opulence is said to have been very serviceable to him, he declared himself empowered by the pontiff to exercise the whole right of the bishops suffragan to the see of Canterbury, at pleasure, for three years, with special permission to select one preferment from each Cathedral church. He was also authorized to remove the guilt of all offences committed within the last hundred days, if duly confessed; to restore one hundred disorderly persons to communion; and to absolve two hundred men from the sin of having laid violent hands on the person of a clergyman. He was further declared to be competent, in the name of the pope, to qualify a hundred youths of



to their great office, as collectors of money, the papal officers had the reputation of frequently adding that of the spy. It is not surprising, accordingly, that they should have been regarded with much jealousy and disaffection, both by the king and the people. Often they were put under arrest, and very rudely dealt with. Their persons were searched, if suspected of bearing about with them illegal documents; and not unfrequently they were made to swear anew, that they would not cause the money of England to pass out of it without consent of the king; that they would not publish any bulls or letters from the pope without the sanction of the civil power; and that they would not betray the counsel of the king to his enemies. If convicted of such offences, according to the loose forms of evidence in those times, they were, without scruple, thrown into prison, or banished the kingdom. The pontiff, of course, complained of these proceedings as disorderly, undutiful, and a manifest in-

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uncanonical age for holding benefices, and forty clergyman for holding more than one benefice with cure of souls. If a primate of the English church could play the rascal in this fashion, what may we not expect in a multitude of subordinates? Wilkins' *Concilia*, II. 463, 484. Lingard, III. 198—203. Symnwell, Bishop of Lincoln, paid a considerable sum to the pope as the price of being exempt from the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Canterbury, and of being made responsible for his proceedings immediately and exclusively to the pontiff. But the then archbishop of Canterbury was Islep, Wycliffe's patron, who soon made it manifest that such disorders were not to be tolerated under his primacy. Collier's *Eccles. Hist.* I. 553.



fringement on his right as the supreme pastor; but the state persisted in imposing such restraints and penalties, as being strictly necessary to preserve the rights of the supreme magistrate.<sup>1</sup>

Statute after statute was passed during the greater part of the fourteenth century on subjects of this nature. In 1307, Testa, an Italian, who acted as chief functionary for the pope in this country, was cited to appear before the parliament, and being loudly censured for his rapacity in the service of his master, was commanded by the two houses to surrender all the monies at that time in his possession, to be placed at the king's use. Similar

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<sup>1</sup> Rymer, III. 187. VI. 109. When John XXII. sent two bishops to negotiate a reconciliation between Edward II, and his consort Isabella, though they previously informed the king that they had not brought with them any letters or documents that could be used to the damage of his interests or those of his subjects, the constable of Dover received orders to address the prelates on their landing, in the following significant terms. 'My lords, it is my duty to charge every stranger, who enters this land, to inform our lord, the king, of the cause of his coming; but this is unnecessary as I am assured you have already so done. It is, however, my duty also to forbid you, in the name of our lord the king, to bring with you anything, or to do anything, that may be prejudicial to the king, his land, or any of his subjects, under the penalties which thereto belong; or to receive, or execute hereafter any order that may arrive, and prove to be prejudicial to him, his land, or his subjects, under the same penalties.' Rymer, IV. 206. So little did our Romanist ancestors hesitate to put the check of law, and of grave penalties, on the tendencies of Rome towards encroachment and aggression by means of bulls, rescripts, &c.—and so systematic were their efforts to protect the king, the land, and themselves against all prejudice and wrong from that quarter. Further evidence on this point is given by Lingard, III. 205 *et seq.*

measures were adopted towards the subordinate agents, and though the king was by no means sincere in the part he took in these proceedings, the provisions made by the parliament against abuses of this nature were generally enforced.<sup>1</sup> Edward I. left these questions in this state. Thus they continued, in substance, through the troubled reign of his successor. But by Edward III. stronger prohibitions of this description were issued,—enforced by heavier penalties. In 1343, it was enacted that all persons who should bring any ecclesiastical document into this kingdom, opposed to the rights of the king or of his subjects, or who should assist in giving publicity to such documents, or in causing the same to be acted upon, should be made to answer in the kings' courts, and be liable to the penalty of forfeiture. The year following, the penalties for such offences were made still more weighty : the delinquent might be proclaimed an outlaw, be made to abjure the realm, or be imprisoned at the king's will. In 1351, a law was published which provided that all livings to which presentations were not duly made by the patrons, should lapse for that occasion to the crown, and not be filled, as had often hitherto been done, by a nomination from the pope. Nor was it allowed in case of disputes about presentations, to pass by the king's court, by appeal to the papal court. The man who sought his remedy by such a course, might be sentenced

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. I. 219, *et seq.*



to lose all his goods, be outlawed, or doomed to perpetual imprisonment. In 1364, another enactment to this effect, but one still more stringent, proclaimed more fully than ever the determination of our Romanist ancestors to preclude the pontiff from meddling with the temporalities of the English church ; declaring all papal bulls which infringed on the rights of the crown, or on the civil independence of the people, to be without authority.<sup>1</sup>

In 1371, a reform of another kind was attempted. On the conversion of the Western nations, after the fall of the Roman Empire, the clergy, as being almost the only educated persons who survived that memorable revolution, were not unfrequently raised to the principal offices of state, and thus became, in effect, the civil, as much as the ecclesiastical rulers, of those times. On their assistance, princes were almost necessarily dependant in conducting all negotiations in which a due attention to form was indispensable, and which were to be committed to writing. England had fallen under clerical influence in this manner as largely as most nations, and from similar causes. In the year mentioned, the offices of Lord Chancellor, and Lord Treasurer, and those of Keeper and Clerk of the Privy Seal, were filled by clergymen. The Master of the Rolls, the Master in Chancery, and the Chancellor and Chamberlain of the Exchequer, were

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. II. 252, 284, 285. Stat. at large. 25 Edw. III. Stat. 6. 27 Edw. III. Stat. 1. 38 Edw. Stat. 2.



dignitaries, or beneficed persons of the same order. One priest was Treasurer for Ireland, another for the Marshes of Calais ; and while the Parson of Oundle is employed as Surveyor of the King's Buildings, the Parson of Harwich has the charge of the Royal Wardrobe. It is known also, that secular occupations still more inconsistent with the duties of the clergyman were often devolved on such men. No charge was made in this instance against the persons holding the above offices as being incompetent, or as being in any way open to more exception than other men of their order would be as filling such positions. The change demanded was on the ground of a new principle—a general rule which should affect the relation of statesmen and churchmen in all time to come. It was, that all secular offices should be henceforth assigned only to secular men, and that the care of churchmen should be restricted to the spiritual duties of their profession. In former times there might have been sufficient reason for the elevation of ecclesiastics to such responsibilities ; but at present it could hardly be pretended that laymen were not to be found who should be fully as competent as ecclesiastics to the discharge of such duties. This measure is attributed by historians to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, a younger son of Edward III. and the most wealthy subject of the crown. It received the sanction of the parliament, and was interpreted at the time as a new evidence of the growing determination of the laity in England to place a much stronger curb than heretofore

on the pretensions of the priesthood. One of Wycliffe's disciples, citing on this subject the very words of his master, writes,—‘Neither prelates nor doctors, priests  
‘nor deacons, should hold secular offices,—that is, of  
‘Chancery, Treasury, Privy Seal, and other such secular  
‘offices in the Exchequer. Neither be Stewards of lands,  
‘nor Stewards of the Hall, nor Clerks of the Kitchen, nor  
‘Clerks of Account, neither be occupied in any secular  
‘office in lords’ courts, more especially while secular  
‘men are sufficient to do such offices.<sup>1</sup> In support of this doctrine, appeal is made to St. Gregory, Chrysostom, Jerome, and other ecclesiastical authorities ; also to the advice of Paul to the Corinthians, and to the teaching of the Saviour on many occasions, both to his disciples and others. In one of his unpublished manuscripts, Wycliffe expresses himself thus,—‘Prelates, and great religious  
‘possessioners, are so occupied in heart about worldly  
‘lordships, and with pleas of business, that no habit of  
‘praying, of thoughtfulness on heavenly things, or the  
‘sins of their own heart, or on those of other men, may  
‘be kept among them: neither may they be found  
‘studying and preaching the Gospel, nor visiting and  
‘comforting the poor.’ And the consequence of calling churchmen to fill the office of ‘rich clerks of the Chan-  
‘cery, of the Common’s Bench, and King’s Bench, and the  
‘Exchequer, and as Justices and Sheriffs, and Stewards

<sup>1</sup> *Ecclesiæ Regimen*. Cotton. MSS. Titus. D. 1. British Museum.



and Bailiffs,' is said to be, that they not only become themselves worldly, but become thereby disqualified to reprove the worldliness of other men.<sup>1</sup> These opinions were propagated with so much success, that in a popular tract intitled, 'Why poor priests have no benefices,' the reformer mentions the practice of the lay patrons in compelling the more needy clergy to fill 'vain offices in their courts,' as a practice so repugnant to the feeling of conscientious priests, that they often prefer to remain unbeneficed, rather than be beneficed on such conditions. So little did patrons feel their responsibility, that upon a vacancy, their eye was commonly turned towards some shrewd 'collector of Pope's-pence,' or to some 'Kitchen Clerk, or one wise in building castles, or in worldly 'business.' In this expression there seems to be a reference to the famous William of Wykeham, a prelate whose skill in architecture and finance had commended him to the favour of the king, and whose removal from the office of Chancellor was one of the changes sought by the novel measure which the parliament had sanctioned. Bishop Latimer complains, in terms singularly resembling those of Wycliffe, concerning this same evil. 'It is,' he says, 'a thing to be lamented, that the prelates, and 'other spiritual persons, will not attend upon their

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<sup>1</sup> 'For Three Skills Lords should constrain Clerks to live in meekness, &c.' C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class c. Tab. III. No. 12. pp. 184—193.



‘ offices—some would rather be clerks of the kitchen, or  
‘ take other offices upon them beside that which they  
‘ have already. But with what conscience these same do  
‘ so I cannot tell.’<sup>1</sup> Evils of this nature, when they have  
once become rooted, do not give way except as society  
itself advances.

When the parliament presented the bill which they had  
passed on this matter to the king, Edward replied that  
he should act in relation to it with the advice of his

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<sup>1</sup> Sermons, Folio, p. 171. It is in the following terms, that Wycliffe expresses himself, in one of his earlier pieces, intitled ‘A Short Rule of Life,’ concerning the obligations of priesthood. ‘If thou art a priest, live thou a holy life. Pass other men in holy prayer, holy desire, and holy speaking: in counselling and teaching the truth. Ever keep the commandments of God, and let his Gospel, and his praises be ever in thy mouth. Ever despise sin, that men may be drawn therefrom, and that thy deeds may be so far rightful, that no man shall blame them with reason. Let thy open life be thus a true book, in which the soldier and the layman may learn how to serve God, and keep his commandments. For the example of good life, if it be open, and continued, striketh lewd men more than open preaching with the word alone. Have meat, and drink, and clothing, but the remnant give to the poor, to those who have freely laboured, but who now may not labour from feebleness or sickness; and thus thou shalt be a true priest, both to God and man.’ This extract is in a volume of extracts, from the writings of Wycliffe in the Bodleian, made by Dr. Thomas James—the substance of it, in much the same terms, I have found in the Comment by Wycliffe on the Decalogue, *Cotton MSS. Titus, D.* British Museum. Foxe cites the Chronicles of Caxton, as reporting that much of the severity of these proceedings against the ruling clergy, and against the papal court, was attributed to the influence of Wycliffe.—Acts and Mon. I. *ubi supra*. The above extract may be taken as indicating the motives that might prompt the reformer to such uses of his influence.

council. But a few weeks later William of Wykeham resigned the office of Chancellor, and the bishop of Exeter ceased to be Lord Treasurer. And if the parliament had learnt so to judge concerning the line that should separate between the holders of secular and spiritual offices, it is natural to conclude that the people generally had become desirous of seeing the cares of the clergy restricted, after this manner, to their proper clerical duties. No doubt, by the more worldly-minded among the priesthood, the teachings of Wycliffe on this topic would be viewed as a ceaseless scattering of sparks upon a material ever prepared to ignite under their influence. In this respect, as in others, the reformer spoke to the times, and he did so with a directness, emphasis, and perseverance that could not fail of effect in the right direction.

It was, it will be remembered, in 1371 that the parliament was convened in which this effort was made to restrict secular offices to the hands of laymen. In the year preceding, the papal court had given its decision on Wycliffe's suit respecting Canterbury Hall. The decision, as we have intimated, was in favour of the course taken by Archbishop Langham, confirming Wodehall and the monks, and excluding Wycliffe and the secular scholars. In 1372, a confirmation of this verdict was obtained from the crown. By what means this last point was accomplished is beyond our knowledge. It is remarkable that the name of Wycliffe does not occur in the document which bears the royal signature. We know that the bribe presented

and accepted on this occasion amounted to two hundred marks, about a thousand pounds of our present money.<sup>1</sup> Edward the Third was now sinking under the infirmities of age, and under the weight of the many cares which his attempts to possess himself of the crown of France had brought upon him. The royal officers were not in a condition to be insensible to the value of money, and what the old king did in this matter, he did, we may suppose, with little scrutiny. Where the inducement to secure his signature was so weighty, artifice, if necessary to that end, would not be wanting. It is not improbable that Wycliffe had by this time become weary of the whole business, and did not care to oppose proceedings of any kind in relation to it. Objects of far greater moment than the quiet possession of a wardenship were now to occupy his thoughts. From this time, his views as a reformer take a wider range, and he gives himself with a new ardour to the diffusion of them.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, chap. I. 15—18.





## CHAPTER VII.

### WYCLIFFE AS PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY.



THE biographers of Wycliffe have been wont to describe him as becoming Professor of Divinity in Oxford, in 1372. This is in a sense true, but not in the sense intended. By a professor, according to modern usage, we understand a person specially chosen to deliver lectures, a person to whom that right is restricted in his particular department, and who is sustained by an endowment, or a fixed stipend. The fact is, however, that professors in this sense were unknown in Oxford in the age of Wycliffe. Indeed it cannot be shown that any actually-endowed professorship had existence in any university until about 1430. Occasional bounties had been afforded a century or a century and-a-half earlier, to fix teachers in the universities ; but these instances of liberality were private and temporary, and of little effect. In the year 1311,

Clement VII. called upon Oxford, and other celebrated universities, to establish professor's chairs for the oriental languages—but the call was uttered in vain. In the fourteenth century, every man in Oxford who proceeded to the degree of Doctor in Divinity—*Sanctæ Theologiæ Professor*—became, in the language of that day, a professor, and might, simply in virtue of his degree, open a hall, and lecture to as many as chose to become his pupils. In this sense Wycliffe became professor of divinity in Oxford, in 1372.

Nothing, however, could be more delusive than to take the idea we have derived from the Oxford of our own time, to the Oxford of the fourteenth century. If the highways to the metropolis were then such quagmires as we have seen ; if the streets within its walls were such dark and filthy tunnels ; and if the modes of aiming to abate its perilous darkness, were such as we see in the attempt to convert the steeple of Bow Church into a huge lamppost for the region about it—these significant incidents should suffice to prevent our supposing that the approaches to Oxford were such as are now familiar to its residents ; or that its streets were at all of such aspect as the present High Street of that famous city. In the outline of the surrounding country, we may see what men then saw, Wycliffe among the rest ; but the narrow street, the high, beetling, wood-and-plaster buildings, almost shutting out the sky ; the coarse thatch on most of the roofs, and the smoke issuing everywhere from doors



or windows, in the absence of chimneys : poles projecting here and there from the upper windows with their many coloured linens pendant on them, after the manner of St. Giles's, more than of St. James's ;<sup>1</sup> the rough mixing of the foot-way and the wheel-way in the greatest thoroughfares, and the sewer-streams running uncovered through the middle of the street ; the poor student huckstering at a stall in the market, or, driving a hard bargain on a fair day, with the packhorse merchant who sells worsted hose, and warm coats, in prospect of the winter ; ' the company ' of varlets,' as Wood calls them, who pretend to be scholars, and are not, but having shuffled themselves in, act much villany by thieving and quarrelling ; the

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<sup>1</sup> ' London continued to be a town, mainly of wood and plaster, ' almost to the period of the great conflagration in the seventeenth ' century.' Hudson Turner's *Ancient Domestic Architecture*, Intro. xi. ' There is one very necessary feature in houses for which we look in ' vain among Saxon drawings,—a chimney. That useful invention ' appears to have been unknown in England, as indeed it was in many ' parts of Europe, until the fifteenth century. Perhaps the strongest ' argument in favour of the opinion, that there were no chimneys in ' the ancient Roman houses, is supplied by the fact that there were ' none in Roman houses of the fourteenth century ; although this con- ' trivance appears to have been then known in at least one of the ' Italian cities. In 1368, a prince of Padua, on making a journey to ' Rome, took with him masons who constructed a chimney in the inn, ' at which he stayed—because in the city of Rome they did not then ' use chimneys ; and all lighted the fire in the middle of the house, ' on the floor.' Ibid. xv. Muratori, *Antiq. Italicæ* II. Diss. 25, col. 418. It is strange that the principle of the chimney being once understood, as it certainly was, so early as the twelfth century, some hundreds of years should have passed before the use of it became general. But such was the fact.



houses of more altitude, and greater breadth, near the cross-ways and the market place, that are used, some for trade, and some for academic purposes ; the gatherings of students, and discoursings of learned teachers ; the gloomy apartments which served as halls of learning, and the rude benches which seated men in their youth, who in their age were to become men of renown, and the hardly less rude platform and chair of the professor—an Occam, it may be, or a Wycliffe—from which, in the church-latin of the day, the preceptor weaves the web of subtle speculations, so famous among schoolmen—all these appearances, and more like them, must be placed under contribution, if our imagination is to realize anything like a just and complete picture of the Oxford of 1372.

It is true, that mixed with Anthony Wood's ' varlets,' and with the many needy scholars then to be found in ' Oxenforde,' were the sons of nobles, and youths of royal blood—but in the order, and not less in the disorder, of the place, all were on a level ; and could a modern look back on the whole scene, as it then was, we doubt not that, should he be a man filled with much love of our modern refinements, he would there fall on very much which his tastes would not dispose him to class with the agreeable. Pomp and brilliancy there may have been, upon occasions, even in those times ; but upon the general appearance of things in those days, such brilliancy must have come in like gleams of sunshine, thrown across a landscape upon a black and cloudy day.

If the fragment of an ornate robe of velvet and gold, preserved in the vestry of Lutterworth church, be indeed a remnant of the divinity robe of the great Reformer, it would be natural to associate ideas of splendour with his presence and history. But we may be sure, either that the said robe is apocryphal, or that it was worn only upon occasions of special ceremony. The students about a professor in that day, were often so poor, that he had not only to teach them without fees, but to assist them, when men of promise, from his own resources. 'Poverty,' say our German neighbours, 'is the scholar's bride,' and verily, in the age under review, this sort of matrimonial relationship, must have been felt in places like Oxford and Paris as inconveniently prevalent.

It would be interesting could we enter the apartment where Wycliffe began his lecturing as Professor of Divinity, and could we fix our gaze, not only on the antique form, and sober colouring, which the imagination is disposed to attribute to such places, but also on the person of the professor, and on his listening pupils. What the reformer really said, however, in that place, and before that auditory, is much more important than any acquaintance with such mere outwardness or visibility as chanced to be connected with his teaching. His Latin treatise, intitled *Triologus*, to which both his enemies and his friends appealed most frequently, after his decease, as being the great depository of his opinions, is not only preserved, but has been twice

printed. In the earlier portions of this work, we no doubt have the exact substance of the discourses addressed by the author to his class in 1372, and some years later. In the last book of the Trialogus, we find opinions concerning the Eucharist, the translation of the Scriptures into the language of the people, and on some other topics, that were not broached by the reformer so early as 1372. But the first three books may be taken as a fair sample of the instruction we should have heard in his lecture-room at that time, had we been among the students of Oxford, who, in that day, took the most advanced position on the side of social and religious advancement. By the help of this treatise, accordingly, we may assist the reader to take his place in the class-room of our new professor of divinity, to listen to the words that fall from him, and to carry home some of the best thoughts in his note-book.

The name Trialogus is given to this work, because it consists of a series of colloquies between three speakers. The names of the speakers, are—Alithia, Pseudis, and Phronesis—Truth, Falsehood, and Wisdom. The opinions and reasonings of Alithia, accordingly, are to be regarded as those of Truth; those of Pseudis, as being the contrary to Truth; while in the person of Phronesis, Wycliffe himself speaks; and in setting forth his judgment on the points at issue, he generally assigns such reasons for his opinions as tend to expose the sophistry of Pseudis, and to sustain the views of Alithia.



Many of the opinions discussed are not of a nature to interest a modern reader, and the debates relating to such opinions are valuable chiefly as they serve to illustrate the *history* of theological speculations. In many instances, also, the method of the argumentation is not more to our taste than the matter of it. It was one of the peculiarities of the scholastic process of reasoning, that in attempting to establish any doctrine, full expression was to be given to every conceivable form of objection against it ; and though it often happened from this cause, that the disputant raised the spirit of the doubter, without being well able to lay it again, the practice itself served to whet the faculties, and to bring them to their office with the greatest degree of circumspection and force. Thus in the *Dialogus*, the language of Pseudis gives expression to the captious and sceptical spirit of the middle age on the great questions relating to philosophy, morals, and theology ; while the speeches of Alithia and Phronesis embody the sounder views of those times on such subjects ; and along with the opinions generally received, come those bolder utterances, which distinguish the writings of Wycliffe, as those of a reformer. But the argument is conducted, especially in the earlier part of the treatise, and as relating to its more obscure topics, in the prescribed scholastic form, the method of reasoning, and the technical expressions frequently recurring in it, being such as have no place even in the most scientific treatises on philosophy or theology in our own age. In one respect,

indeed, the works of the ancient schoolmen bear a strong resemblance to our later literature, inasmuch as there is very little in the speculations of the modern sceptic which may not be found in the writings of those middle-age churchmen. In some instances the polemic may have secretly sympathized with the freedom of thought which he affected to condemn ; but, in general, the atheist, the infidel, and the heretic, were imaginary foes, conjured up that the militant ecclesiastic might indulge, as in a species of tournament, in such displays of his skill as should secure to him the honours of a triumph.

That there should have been men during the middle age disposed to bestow a laborious attention on such a system of dialectics, is not surprizing : but Wycliffe was a man of earnest piety, of an impassioned temperament, with a mind eminently practical, and was intent through life on bringing about great practical reforms. Nevertheless, if we may credit the testimony of enemies in his favour, even that of the most bitter among them, we must believe that no man of his age was more deeply learned, or more thoroughly skilled in the sciences of the schoolmen. According to Knighton, a contemporary and an adversary,<sup>1</sup>—"as a theologian, he was the most eminent ' in the day ; as a philosopher, second to none ; and as a ' schoolman incomparable. He made it his great aim, with ' learned subtlety, and by the profundity of his own genius,

<sup>1</sup> Henry de Knighton de Eventibus Angliæ, col. 2644. Leland de

‘to surpass the genius of other men.’ Instances, indeed, are not wanting, in which the speculative and the practical, the abstract and the impassioned, have been united in strong proportions in the same man. In Pascal, that purely intellectual concentration, which is so necessary to success in the exact sciences, was combined with the imagination of the poet, and with the aspirations of the saint. But opposites of this nature, meet in something like equal apportionments, in the weak, much more frequently than in the strong—and among the reformers, it is in the genius of Calvin that we see, in this respect, the nearest resemblance to the mind of Wycliffe.

The first and second books of the *Triialogus*, are the least extended, and the least valuable. The third and fourth books embrace more than three-fourths of the whole treatise, and abound in matter more or less interesting to every sincere protestant.

We may suppose, then, that announcement has been made, in due form, and by the proper authority, that

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Script. Brit. 379. ‘This is certain and cannot be denied, but that he, being public reader of Divinity in Oxford, was, for the rude time wherein he lived, famously reputed for a great clerk a deep school-man, and no less expert in all kind of philosophy:—the which doth not only appear by his own most famous and learned writings and monuments, but also by the confession of Walden, his most cruel and bitter enemy; who in a certain epistle written unto Pope Martin the Fifth, saith that he was wonderfully astonished at his most strong arguments, with the places of authority which he had gathered, and with the vehemency and force of his reasons.’ Foxe, l. 554.



John de Wycliffe has taken his degree as *Sanctæ Theologiæ Professor*; and that this is followed by an announcement from Dr. Wycliffe himself, stating that it is his intention to lecture on theology. He mentions the place in which he hopes to meet such students as may be disposed to attend, and fixes the hour. At the appointed time you make your way to the street, and the school, or house, which have been named. You take your place in the apartment which serves the purpose of a lecture-room. The persons assembled consist mostly of young men, but you see some older heads, long familiar to Oxford, among them. At one end of the room, is the professor's chair, on a slightly elevated platform; and at the time fixed Dr. Wycliffe, accompanied on this occasion by some personal friends, makes his appearance, and, amidst expressions of welcome, takes his seat.

The professor commences by reminding his auditory of the importance of the subject to which their attention will be invited, and of the spirit in which it behoves them to address themselves to such inquiries. His first topic, as might be expected, is the argument for the being of a God. The professor reasons in the course of this lecture to demonstrate that the Divine Being exists, and exists as 'the first cause of all existence.' You are sufficiently interested to continue your attendance; and you listen from day to day, as he endeavours to show—that the Divine nature has of necessity precedence in being to all other natures; that God not only exists, but that he must

be 'whatever it is better to be than not to be ;' and as he deduces from this conclusion the necessary existence of the Divine Perfections—nothing being more certain, than that it is better that the Divine Being should be just, wise, omnipotent, and the like, than that he should be wanting in such excellence. You may be more bewildered than edified as he attempts to show, by pushing this reasoning somewhat further, that the Divine Nature must not only be a unity, but a trinity in unity ; and you may feel that you have ascended to the thickest cloud of metaphysics while you listen to the discoursing of the professor about the '*potentia*' of the Divine Nature, as being God the Father ; the '*notitia*,' or the power of self-knowledge, as denoting God the Son ; and the '*quietatio*'—the repose, the calm rest of the Divine essence, as God the Holy Ghost. But you find him careful to explain the purely metaphysical sense in which the term *person* is used in this connexion. Nevertheless, to the above properties of the Divine Nature the term person is applied, and these three persons are described as co-equal and co-eternal. 'These 'three persons,' you hear him say, 'are one first cause, as 'they are one God ; and not three causes, as they are not 'three Gods.' Touching on the doctrine of 'procession,' he says, it is in the sense of 'causation,' and not in the sense of 'divinity' that God can be said to be 'the cause of God.' But if you regard such speculations as being much more subtle than wise ; you are more alive to what is passing when the 'Evangelical Doctor,'—as he soon

came to be called—denounces the authority of tradition, exposes the folly of resting upon it, and reiterates, on the authority of St. Augustine, that if there be any truth, it is in the Scripture, and that there is no truth to be found in the schools, that may not ‘be found in more excellence’ in the Bible.

We have now reached the end of the professor’s first course. In the next, your attention is to be directed from the existence and the perfections of the Deity, to the manifestation of them in his works. The origin of the world, and the constitution of created things generally, are now to be the theme of discourse. The powers of the mind, in their relation to the body, and to the outward universe, are now to be matters of enquiry—including some speculations on the nature, the gradations, and the fall of angels, and concerning the foreknowledge and pre-ordination of things by the Almighty in its relation to the ends of his moral government. For a time, however, you find the investigations of this second course to be scarcely less perplexing and abstract than those of the first. But you are pleased to see as you proceed, that Dr. Wycliffe is a man who dares to think for himself in philosophy, no less than in theology and religion. He has no faith either in astrology or in alchemy: and by that intelligent scepticism he places himself some centuries in advance of his age. He tells you, that, in his judgment, the current delusions on these subjects had done much to injure the science of medicine, and hardly less



to detract from the certainty and authority of 'the venerable science of theology.' The lecturer treats in this course on the immortality of the soul, as a doctrine to be deduced from reason : and on this theme the professor expatiates after this wise.

'Sober men entertain no doubt, but that the soul of man is immortal : and since it is in the soul that we find the identity of the man, it follows that the man must be immortal. For this reason it was, that apostles underwent death with such courage and boldness. To them, the imprisonment and burden of the flesh, was an irksome restraint and oppression, and they could therefore rejoice to meet death in a just cause.'

'But philosophers assign many reasons whereby to establish this opinion. In the first place, we are taught by Aristotle, and in truth by common experience, that there is a certain energy in the mind of man that is imperishable. But no energy or operation can have more prominence than is in its subject ;—now the subject in this case is the mind or soul, and that therefore must be imperishable. Aristotle gives weight to his reasoning on this point, by adducing in its favour the *intellect* of man, which so far from being weakened, is rather invigorated by the decay of the body—for there is an increase of keenness in the speculative intellect of the old, even when every corporeal faculty has failed them. This perceptive faculty must have a foundation of some sort to rest upon, and a foundation of a nature

‘ not to require such an instrument as the body. We  
‘ therefore place the human intellect above all the animal  
‘ faculties. For in those faculties the brute surpasses  
‘ man, as the poet saith, who shows it from experience  
‘ —“ the boar excels us in hearing, the spider in touch,  
‘ the vulture in scent, the lynx in sight, the ape in the  
‘ sense of tasting.” And since man does not surpass  
‘ animals in merely animal sense, we are shut up to the  
‘ conclusion that his excellence lies in intellect. But  
‘ where would be his advantage if he must part even  
‘ with this at death? In such case would not God seem  
‘ to cast contempt on his favoured offspring? We con-  
‘ clude therefore that man hath an understanding which  
‘ he takes away from the body, as being of himself, and  
‘ which abides for ever. Furthermore, man has within him-  
‘ self the natural desire to live for ever, and the wiser  
‘ men are, the more do they thus feel, and give their  
‘ testimony to this truth. Since, then, nature is not to be  
‘ frustrated in a purpose of such moment, it is manifest  
‘ that there is in man, according to nature, a certain  
‘ understanding that exists for ever—so man is immortal.

‘ In respect to every man we must come to this con-  
‘ clusion. For if we affirm that immortality belongs to  
‘ the nature of any one individual, we must affirm that  
‘ it is inherent in every individual of the like nature,  
‘ otherwise it would not be inherent by nature, but by  
‘ chance. Since then man has a longing to exist together  
‘ with God, as the noblest and most natural limit of his

‘ desires, no reason can be assigned, apart from his own  
‘ demerit, that should hinder the accomplishment of such  
‘ a hope, especially when we remember that the destru-  
‘ tion of the body does not annihilate, but rather gladdens  
‘ the soul. Philosophers, accordingly, and natural reason,  
‘ teach us, that it is well to die for the public good, and  
‘ to avoid what is disgraceful and criminal. But this  
‘ preference could not be shewn to be reasonable, except  
‘ as the man who so dies can be said to possess a life  
‘ after this life. Of this sort are the many reasons,  
‘ amounting almost to demonstration, which have often  
‘ induced the wisest men to die for the good of others.  
‘ In such a case they have not died in vain, for then  
‘ would they have been the most senseless and wretched  
‘ of men—in common with many beside who persevere  
‘ in virtue to the end of their days. Another kind of  
‘ reward must, in the end, be assigned to these persons,  
‘ by an all-bountiful Deity, who has determined that  
‘ they should die in a course of virtue ; and that reward  
‘ to them must be, not in this life, but in a life to come.  
‘ And so it follows that the soul of man will survive the  
‘ death of the body. And inasmuch as the Scripture is  
‘ full of testimony to this truth, it is most necessary that  
‘ man should embrace it. It is just as binding on the  
‘ Christian that he should believe that the soul will  
‘ exist after this life, as that we should believe that God  
‘ is, and that he is the rewarder of the good.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Triologus*, Lib. II. c. viii.



So does our preceptor reason to prove the immortality of the soul, not with a logic that can be deemed invulnerable, but with a cogency quite as great as learned men have commonly brought to the subject. But this second course of lectures is followed by a third, in which the professor enters on the questions of theology and morals as presented in Scripture—where they come up as the teachings of authority, and not merely as questions of reason. Here the first lecture is ‘on the virtues,’ that term being used to denote, not merely the *dispositions*, but the *powers* of the mind. But as we listen, we feel that on this subject the subtleties of Aristotle come too much into the place of the simplicity of St. Paul. The next lecture is on faith. Here the professor is more intelligible. The term faith, he observes, is sometimes used to denote the act of believing, sometimes a believing habit of mind, and sometimes the truth which is believed. There is, you hear him say, a faith which is defective, as that of devils, who believe and tremble; and another kind of faith, which grows to completeness, because it works by love. This love belongs to the heart of all men who are true believers; and all who have it not, are in a sense unbelievers. There are three properties pertaining to faith. First, that it relates wholly to truth—truth which the believers should defend even to the death. Second, it belongs to faith that its object should be of such a nature as not to admit of demonstration—that it should be obscure to the eye of sense, for we can-

not be said to believe in that which we see. Thirdly, faith is the foundation, or substance, which gives the pilgrim power to rest in the objects of his belief—the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Our professor next extends his discourse from faith, to hope, and charity. Hope, he says, is distinguished from faith in three respects. First, hope has regard only to the realizing of some future good, but faith has respect to truth universal, always existing as such. Secondly, hope falls short of that evidence and knowledge concerning its objects which belongs to faith, resting in a medium between doubting and believing. Thirdly, hope has reference only to the good which is possible to the person hoping; faith, on the other hand, has respect to things which may be advantageous or disadvantageous to the person who believes.

But the virtue, says the professor, especially necessary to the Christian pilgrim, is charity. Without charity no man can enter heaven. It is the wedding-garment, the want of which must bring condemnation in the last judgment. True charity consists in loving God with all the heart, and soul, and mind—a commandment which, though first and greatest, is but poorly observed by our fallen and unhappy race. The second command is like the first:—That we love all the works of God, and especially that we love our neighbour as ourselves. We all *profess* to be mindful of this charity one towards another,

but our actions say the contrary, and it is fitting that men should believe in our actions, more than in our words. We may test our love to the law of God by three things—by our attention to it, our observance of it, and our readiness to defend it. The things to which we attend most, we love most; and who is there now-a-days who does not think more of that which may ‘bring him money,’ than of that which may fit him for becoming obedient to God’s law? But is this to be in charity? Is it not written—“Charity seeketh not her own?” So in substance does the reformer discourse to his pupils from the chair—and becoming more earnest as he proceeds, he says—‘Let us see now, whether the man calling himself a Christian pilgrim, is more anxious about his own private advantage, than about obedience to the law of Christ. When so judged, it is plain that the greater portion of mankind are devoid of charity, and if a man be so rooted in this habit of perverseness, by reason of his continued failure in attention to, and obedience of the Divine Law, who can doubt whether that man should be deemed a heretic or not. And as to the defence of this law, if we look to the higher orders, who can hesitate to say, that not only the laity, but still more our prelates, show much greater concern to protect their private interests, than to uphold the law of Christ. If this were not so, they surely would destroy, as far as they have power, whatever is opposed to that law; but we everywhere see both prelates and civil



‘ dignitaries exalting and defending the laws and interests of men, placing them before the law of God. Hence we see the civil law executed with such scrupulousness, a trifling amount of evidence being sufficient to bring down penalties upon anything that infringes on the good of society. From the far greater pains which men thus take, to put merely human laws into execution, we see plainly the great preponderance they have in men’s estimation, and how false is the assertion of such men, when they pretend that they love God with all their heart. In truth, all, or the greater number, among our religious orders will fall under this condemnation in the day of the Son of Man ; inasmuch as they all seek their own, or the interests of their own order, neglecting the defence of the divine law. Christ wished his law to be observed willingly, freely, that in such obedience men might find happiness. Hence he appointed no civil punishment to be inflicted on transgressors of his commandments, but left the persons neglecting them to a suffering more severe, that would come after the day of judgment.’

In such utterances we find Wycliffe the schoolman, giving place, with advantage, to Wycliffe the reformer. The lectures which follow, treat of the nature of sin, and touch on the distinction commonly made between venial and mortal sins. These terms, says the professor, are commonly in the mouth, not only of the people, but of the prelates also ; men ‘ who know better how to extort

‘ money for sins, than how to cleanse any man from  
‘ them, or how to distinguish between the mortal and  
‘ the venial, about which they babble so much.’ The  
scriptures, he declares, know nothing of this distinction.  
‘ A sin may be called mortal, when, according to the  
‘ judgment of God, it is worthy of death ; and thus it is  
‘ the sin of final impenitence only, that is, the sin against  
‘ the Holy Ghost—that is properly mortal. But any  
‘ other sin, inasmuch as it is a sin that may be pardoned,  
‘ may be called venial. But as those actual sins which  
‘ extinguish divine grace, cannot be determined by our  
‘ limited knowledge, and we are thus left in ignorance  
‘ as to what sins committed in our pilgrimage may be  
‘ venial, and what mortal, we are bound to avoid all  
‘ sin whatsoever, seeing that we are aware, in a general  
‘ way, of its evil consequences, but know little of its real  
‘ enormity. The believer may judge somewhat of the evil  
‘ of sin, from the fact that he owes to God an infinite  
‘ gratitude, and the greater the gratitude due, the greater  
‘ must be the guilt of failure. So that the evil of every  
‘ sin is infinite. The greater the person against whom a  
‘ sin is committed, the greater is the sin ; and so sin is  
‘ infinite as God is infinite. The measure in which God  
‘ should be sought, is the measure in which sin should  
‘ be avoided ; but God is infinitely worthy to be sought  
‘ unto, therefore sin is infinitely fit to be avoided, and an  
‘ infinite evil when committed.’

To the ears of English students in 1372, some of these

sayings would be new and startling. This distinction between venial and mortal sin, was of high moment in the discipline of Romanism. Good people who were duly in their place at the confessional, were not allowed to be in ignorance on that point. The tax on absolution, was great or small, as the sin to be 'assoiled' was accounted great or small. We can therefore imagine the wakefulness depicted in the countenances of those who listen to Wycliffe, as he thus speaks. We see the significant glance or smile which passes from one to the other, as the 'babble' of prelates on this matter is thus flung aside, and as the lash is applied to men who knew how 'to extort money for sins,' while doing little to reform the sinner.

In his next lecture, which is on the subject of 'grace,' this vein is indulged still more freely. From the great evil of sin, he infers, that God only can forgive sin; and speaking of the 'indulgences' so commonly dispensed by the church authorities of the age, he says, 'It is plain to me, that these prelates, in granting indulgences, do commonly blaspheme the wisdom of God, pretending, in their avarice and folly, that they understand what they really know not.' His voice is raised, and his manner becomes impassioned, as he denounces the 'sensual simonists' of the times, who 'chatter on the subject of grace, as though it were something to be bought or sold like an ox or an ass, who, by so doing, learn to make a merchandize of selling pardons, the devil having availed



‘himself of an error in the schools, to introduce, after ‘this manner, heresies in morals.’ So far, he contends, is morality from admitting of such doings, that it rests on a foundation in the nature of things, anterior to mere will in man, or in his Maker. Its principles are immutable and eternal. It is right, not because God wills it, but God wills it because it is right. It is not possible there should be a divine mandate calling upon us to violate the divine laws: but if there were, ‘a man would not be bound, in such cases, even to obey God.’ Such is the professor’s doctrine as to the foundation of right and of moral obligation: though you often hear him appeal to the connexion between virtuous being and well-being, as furnishing a strong inducement to obedience, an inducement that cannot be in itself wrong, if kept within its proper limits, inasmuch as it comes from the divine laws, and must, therefore, be of divine appointment.

On another day, you hear the reformer address his pupils after this manner. ‘All Christians then should be ‘the soldiers of Christ. But it is plain that many are ‘chargeable with great neglect of this duty, inasmuch as ‘the fear of losing temporal goods, and worldly friendships, and apprehensions about life and fortune, prevent ‘so great a number from being faithful in setting forth ‘the cause of God, from standing manfully for its defence, ‘or, if need be, from suffering death in its behalf. From ‘such a source also comes that subterfuge of Lucifer, ‘argued by some of our modern hypocrites, who say, that

‘ to suffer martyrdom cannot be a duty now, as it was in  
‘ the primitive church, since in our time, all men, or at  
‘ least the great majority, are believers, so that the tyrant  
‘ who may persecute Christ to the death in his members,  
‘ is no more, and this is the cause why our day has not  
‘ its martyrs as formerly. But in this pretext, we, no  
‘ doubt, see a device of Satan to shield sin. For the be-  
‘ liever in maintaining the law of Christ, should be pre-  
‘ pared, as his soldier, to endure all things at the hands  
‘ of the satraps of this world ; declaring boldly to Pope  
‘ and Cardinals, to Bishops and Prelates, how unjustly,  
‘ according to the teaching of the gospel, they serve God  
‘ in their offices, subjecting those committed to their care,  
‘ to great injury and peril, such as must bring on them  
‘ a speedy destruction in one way or another. All this  
‘ applies indeed to temporal lords, but not in so great a  
‘ degree as to the clergy ; for as the abomination of de-  
‘ solation begins with a perverted clergy, so the consola-  
‘ tion begins with a converted clergy. Hence we Chris-  
‘ tians need not visit pagans, to convert them by enduring  
‘ martyrdom in their behalf ; *we have only to declare*  
‘ *with constancy the law of God before Cæsarian prelates,*  
‘ *and straightway the flower of martyrdom will be at*  
‘ *hand.*’

Wycliffe teaches, that one main cause of this corrupt state of the church, consists in its great wealth, which began to exceed all wholesome limitation, from the time when Pope Silvester accepted an imperial endowment

from the hands of Constantine. Sylvester, indeed, or whoever it was that accepted of such aid, may have sinned little, if compared with many of his successors, as we can suppose him to have sinned in great part through ignorance. Before that time, says the professor, men of an apostolic spirit rose to eminence in the church, and only in the measure in which they could make themselves useful to it. 'But now, by reason of endowments, the least worthy are often the most elevated, many foolishly undertaking to serve the Church for the sake of gain, beyond their powers of service: and by so doing, unfit themselves for being useful to the Church, and become heedless of the teachings and commands of Christ in regard to temporal things, and the proper manner of using them.'

It is in the following terms that Wycliffe speaks, at this stage in the history of his opinions, on the subject of saint-worship. 'Whoever entreats a saint, should direct his prayer to Christ as God, not to the saint specially, but to Christ. Nor doth the celebration, or festival of a saint, avail anything, except in so far as it may tend to the magnifying of Christ, inciting us to honour him, and increasing our love to him. If there be any celebration in honour of the saints, which is not kept within these limits, it is not to be doubted that cupidity, or some other evil cause has given rise to such services. Hence, not a few think it would be well for the Church, if all festivals of that nature were abolished, and those only



‘retained which have respect immediately to Christ. For  
‘then, they say, the memory of Christ would be kept  
‘more freshly in the mind, and the devotions of the com-  
‘mon people would not be unduly distributed among the  
‘members of Christ. But, however this may be, it is  
‘certain that the service paid to any saint, must be use-  
‘less, except as it incites to the love of Christ, and is of  
‘a nature to secure the benefit of his mediation. For  
‘the scriptures assure us that Christ is the Mediator be-  
‘tween God and man. Hence, many are of opinion, that  
‘when prayer was directed only to that middle person of  
‘the Trinity, for spiritual help, the church was more  
‘flourishing, and made greater advances than it does  
‘now, when many new intercessors have been found out  
‘and introduced.’

The men who hearkened as Wycliffe thus spoke, must have felt that cautious as seemed the language of the public instructor, this doctrine, if generally embraced, was of a nature to give a new complexion and a new soul to the religion of Christendom. Saints and the Virgin, as objects of worship, had come almost everywhere into the place of Christ and of God. Old Greece or Old Rome never presented a more palpable system of polytheism, than obtained among the nations of Europe, under the name of Christianity, while the Oxford professor was thus lecturing. It was not a small thing in that day, thus to assert the claims of the ‘One Mediator,’ and so far to repudiate the pretensions of ‘the many

new intercessors that had been found out and introduced,' since the purer ages of the church had passed away.

Wycliffe did not discourse thus without being reminded of his danger. Men who wished him well, admonished him, that it would become him, as the teacher of such opinions, to lay his account with having the 'satraps'—the great churchmen of the age, arrayed in bitter hostility against him. It might all be very true, that the doctrine he taught was the doctrine of scripture; but, unhappily, men had been so long accustomed to pay little regard to the authority of that oracle, that few were found who had the courage to appeal to it. In reply to such cautions, he says, 'I have learnt from experience, the truth of what you say. The chief cause, beyond doubt, of the existing state of things, is our want of faith in Holy Scripture. We do not sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or we should abide by the authority of his word, especially that of the Evangelists, as of infinitely greater weight than any other. Inasmuch as it is the will of the Holy Spirit, that our attention should not be dispersed over a large number of objects, but concentrated on one sufficient source of instruction, it is his pleasure that the books of the Old and New Law should be *read* and *studied*; and that men should not be taken up with other books, which, true as they may be, and containing even scripture truth, as they may by implication, are not to be confided in without caution and limitation. Hence

‘ Augustine, (Book II. *de Ordine Rerum*,) often enjoins  
‘ it on his readers, not to place any faith in his word or  
‘ writings, except in so far as they have their foundation  
‘ in scripture, wherein, as he often says, are contained  
‘ all truth, either directly or by implication. Of course,  
‘ we should judge in this manner concerning the writings  
‘ of other holy doctors, and much more concerning the  
‘ writings of the Roman church, and of her doctors in  
‘ these later times. If we follow this rule, the scriptures  
‘ will be held in becoming reverence. The papal bulls  
‘ will be superseded, as they ought to be. The veneration  
‘ of men for the laws of the papacy, as well as for  
‘ the opinions of our modern doctors, which, since the  
‘ loosing of Satan, they have been so free to promulgate,  
‘ will be restrained within due limits. What concern  
‘ have the faithful with writings of this sort, except as  
‘ they are honestly deduced from the fountain of Scripture?  
‘ By pursuing such a course, it is not only in our  
‘ power to reduce the mandates of prelates and popes to  
‘ their just place, but the errors of these new religious  
‘ orders also might be corrected, and the worship of  
‘ Christ well purified and elevated.’

Such, good reader, is the tone of bold and wholesome thinking, which found ventilation in Oxford in 1372, and for some years subsequent. Young men who listened to such teaching, left the lecture-room, as we may suppose, in grave musing, or in high talk together, upon what they had heard. Many a night, as we imagine,



did the students of Wycliffe's class see verging into morning, as they examined and discussed the questions which day by day were suggested to them. Nor did the talk end there. It was the dinner-talk, the supper-talk, the highway-talk—the talk, somehow, to which every man felt himself to be a party. We have loop-holes enough through which to look into those times, to be quite sure that it was so. Conservative men,—men fixed in old habits of thought, who saw, or thought they saw danger in the distance, were compelled to be observant of what was passing, and gave out their protests and their cautions : while men of another order felt as if a morning freshness had come upon them. These last were delighted beyond measure with the prospect of seeing the conventional and the worn-out, so long familiar to them, give place to something better ; and abundant was the material for speech-making in them which struggled to get utterance. Truly, John de Wycliffe, thou art a committed man, and had better not have gone so far, if thou art not prepared to go further. Thou hast said, a man has 'only to declare with constancy the 'law of Christ, before Cæsarian prelates, and straight-way the flower of martyrdom will be at hand : '—and as thou hast clearly resolved to 'declare,' after that fashion, we must suppose that thy account is laid with the thing 'at hand.'



## CHAPTER VIII.

### WYCLIFFE AS A DIPLOMATIST.

**W**E have seen that the Romanism of England in the fourteenth century, was leavened in no small degree by the spirit of Reform. The preaching of the two houses of parliament, was, at times, almost as adverse to the ambition and worldliness of churchmen, as anything that might be heard in the great room of that huge house of wood, and plaster, and thatch, in Oxford, where John de Wycliffe gave his lectures. In 1373, while the professor was discoursing to his pupils in the manner we have shown, the barons of England, and the good knights and burgesses from her counties and boroughs, returned in great wrath to their old topic—the mercenary doings of the court of Rome. The English parliament had said to that court, once and again,—‘ You shall not send your ‘provisors’ into our ‘land. To do so, and to defraud English patrons of

‘their right of presentation by such means, is a flagrant ‘wrong. The thing shall not be.’ Nevertheless, it seems, the thing continued to be—and if we may credit the indignant remonstrants who so spoke in that year, both lords and commons, we must suppose that this abuse had become greater, in place of becoming less. But what was to be done? We must petition the king, was the answer. Well—and what should the king do? He should appoint fitting and trusty men to communicate with the said court, and to insist that greater respect be paid in that quarter to our rights and properties. And they so spoke to the king, and the king answered—It shall be as you desire.

Commissioners were appointed, consisting of Gilbert, Bishop of Bangor, as of the secular clergy; of Bolton, a monk of Dunholm, as of the religious orders; and of William de Burton and John de Shepey, who might see that right should be done to their brotherhood of the laity. The papal court, as we know, was now abiding at Avignon. The pope reigning was Gregory XI. When the English diplomatists came face to face with the Romans—or more properly with the French—their language was:—we claim in behalf of our sovereign lord king Edward, and of his liege subjects in England, —‘that the pope shall abstain from all ‘reservations’ ‘of benefices in our English church; that the clergy ‘shall henceforth freely enjoy their election to their ‘several dignities, and that in the case of electing a



‘ bishop it shall be enough that his election be confirmed  
‘ by his metropolitan, as was the ancient custom.<sup>1</sup>

This was to speak plainly—leaving no room for mistake. ‘ The pope must not think to reduce the patronage  
‘ of the English church to a matter of mere name or sufferance. In the appointment of a metropolitan, some  
‘ place may be ceded to the authority of his holiness ;  
‘ but in the appointment of ordinary bishops, and of all  
‘ ecclesiastics below bishops, the authorities of our nation  
‘ must be sufficient, and must not be disturbed by the  
‘ coming in of authority from your court, the same being  
‘ contrary to justice, and to ‘ ancient custom :’—we repeat  
‘ these words ‘ ancient custom’—for the time was when  
‘ such encroachments were unknown in England or elsewhere.’

This blunt English dealing was met in a manner never wanting to the corrupt agents of a corrupt power. It was admitted that the proceedings of the papal agents had not been conducted in all cases in the most orderly manner possible ; that there was certainly some ground for complaint ; and without entering on the difficult questions involved in the demands now made by the king of England, his majesty might rest assured that nothing would be done in such matters which the good of his own kingdom, no less than the interest of the church, should not be found to warrant.

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<sup>1</sup> Barnes’s Ed III. 264. Cotton’s Abridgment, 119, Lewis, c. iii.

With words—mere words, of this sort, the commissioners were obliged to be content. Not so the English parliament. In the next year the reform party in the two houses set on foot an enquiry as to the exact number of benefices in England, which, by means of this custom of ‘provisors,’ had ceased to be at the disposal of the patron, and had passed into the hands of foreigners.

What the statistics furnished by this enquiry amounted to, we do not know. It appears, however, that a second embassy was forthwith appointed to present a further and a still stronger protest, against encroachments in this form. The first name in this second commission is still that of Gilbert, Bishop of Bangor. But the question appears to have arisen—how to give to this new commission the degree of strength necessary to its success.

Wycliffe had given evidence of his learning, patriotism, and courage in his disputes with the religious orders,—those sworn creatures of the papacy—and in his published argument against the king John tribute; and just now he was filling all Oxford, and even England itself, with talk and debate by his bold protests against the ambition and avarice of the ruling churchmen,—protests which his prosecutors, two years later, affirmed him to have uttered openly and very often long before. The question came accordingly,—would not Wycliffe be the man to impart the needed force to the deputation from the court of England to the papal court? The answer was, He is the fitting man, and John de Wycliffe was appointed

accordingly, and on being summoned, signified his readiness to obey.

One could wish at this point, that the papal court were not just now in its captivity at Avignon. It would seem good rather that it should be in its proper seat, and in its proper freedom at Rome, that Wycliffe might be sent thither to see Romanism in its natural centre, and in its most natural development. At all events we should say—let him go to Avignon, let him see what sort of religiousness it is which obtains at the heart of the system, and where the main springs of its life, such as it is, are at work. But even this was not to be. The commissioners are to meet in the old, populous, and wealthy town of Bruges.<sup>1</sup>

But this meeting at Bruges had its effect upon the future. Wycliffe reached that place in August 1374. During the conferences with the Papal envoys which followed, Bruges became the seat of negotiations between the ambassadors of France and England on matters affecting the interests of the two nations. The English

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<sup>1</sup> Rymeri Fædera. viii. 41. Barnes's Edw. III. 866. Foxe, Acts and Mon. i. 560—562. Grossteste, the famous bishop of Lincoln, carried some of his complaints to the papal court, but like most honest men returned little satisfied with what he saw there. Matt. Paris, 802. 'Tired with the maladministration and mercenariness of the Roman See, he left Rome and returned into England, and being dissatisfied with the state of the English Church at his arrival, he designed to quit his bishopric, and to retire for study and devotion.'—Collier, Eccles. Hist. I. 458. Not wise—die at thy work !



ambassadors were the Earl of Salisbury, Sudbury, Bishop of London, and John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.<sup>1</sup> Thus we have envoys from the same court, meeting in the same town, in a foreign land ; detained there for a considerable interval ; and these envoys are Englishmen. These facts borne in mind, it will be seen that we should sin against the all-but certainty of the case, were we to be in doubt as to the fact that Wycliffe became known to the Duke of Lancaster at Bruges, if not before.

In place of entertaining any distrust on this point, it is easy to imagine that we see John of Gaunt and John Wycliffe in some antique apartment of that ancient town, where they are wont to meet when the engagements of the day have closed, and where they give themselves to earnest talk upon those questions concerning both the church and the state, by which society in England was then so much moved. With such a picture before us, it is easy to foresee how it should have come to pass that two years afterwards, John of Gaunt is found ready to cast his shield over Wycliffe in the most public and chivalrous manner, when he saw the reformer menaced with the sort of penalties commonly meted out to men of his vocation.

In September in the following year, we see something of the result of the embassy to which Wycliffe was a party. Six bulls were then addressed by the pope to the

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<sup>1</sup> Rymer. viii. 47 Edw. III. Mai 12. 49 Edw. III. Jan. 27, Feb. 20.

king of England, touching the questions at issue between this nation and the papacy.<sup>1</sup> In these instruments it was provided, that no person in possession of a benefice in England should be disturbed in such possession by any intervention of authority from the court of the pontiff; that such benefices as had been disposed of in anticipation of their vacancy by Urban V., but which had not yet become vacant, should be left to be filled according to presentation by the patrons of those benefices; that the titles of certain clergymen to benefices which had been questioned by the late pope, should be confirmed; and that all demand on the first-fruits of the livings to which the clergymen holding such titles had been appointed, should be remitted; and also that an assessment should be made of the revenues derived by certain cardinals from livings in England, to defray the cost of repairing the churches, and other ecclesiastical buildings, holden by them, and which had been allowed to fall into decay;—the extent of such assessments to be determined by a jury convened from the neighbourhood in which the buildings were situate.

By means of its officials—dark and prying personages, who might be found spread over every ecclesiastical district of the country—the papal court could interfere in the above manner with all church property. The weak

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<sup>1</sup> Rymeri Fædera. vii. 49 Edw. iii. 3, Sep. 1. Cotton's Abridgment. 50 and 51. Edw. III. Walsingham, A.D. 1374.

had no security as opposed to them, and the strong often needed all their strength to protect themselves against a scheme of plundering so systematic and so powerful. We see from the above concessions, that proceedings of this nature had become so shameless, that even the papal court, when the enormity of its doings was laid bare, felt obliged to admit that the case against it was such as could not be met. It will be observed, however, that in the papal documents, the only admission of error, has respect to certain things *done*, not at all to the *principle* on which those things were said to have been done. The pretence of the papacy to authority for interference with the rights of the crown, of the chapters, and of the patrons of livings, for the purpose of replenishing its treasury by obtruding itself into their place according to occasion—*that* is not given up. The fault of the preceding pontiff was not in acting upon it, but in acting upon it with an indiscretion little creditable to his supposed infallibility: and the impoverished nation was left to solace itself as it best might, from the implied assurance that in future these schemes of spoliation would be carried on with such caution and moderation as a more shrewd and calculating policy would dictate.

Gilbert, the Bishop of Bangor, on whom the chief responsibility of this embassy devolved, was translated immediately after his return to the see of Hereford; and in 1389 to that of St. David's, and as his advancement in both instances was by means of papal provisors, it is



hardly to be doubted that in his case the mission had been entrusted to very improper hands.

It is manifest, that our view as to the purport of the documents thus obtained, was the view taken of them at the time, in this country. This may be inferred from the fact that the commissioners were instructed to prosecute their negotiations with a view to something more satisfactory. In the April of the following year, the parliament again petitioned the king on this subject ; and the answer then given, was, that the matters in dispute were still in the hands of the commissioners at Bruges.

But the truth is, the state of affairs in England at this time, was not favourable to any better result. The health of the aged king was rapidly declining. His authority and influence on the continent were almost annihilated ; and at home, faction brought its weaknesses and cares. The papal court never failed to make its own use of such junctures. Its spiritual power has become strong, wherever the temporal power had become weak. Nothing beyond vague promises could, in this instance, be extorted from it ; and those promises, as usual, were accompanied by such conditions as might furnish a ready pretext for resuming, another day, what had seemed for the moment to have been abandoned. Thus the pontiff promised that he would not again invade the rights of patrons in the English church. But it was only on condition that the crown should in future shew itself duly respectful of such rights. Thus the ecclesiastical property of England was

regarded as being, at least, as much the property of the pope as of the sovereign; and as cases of questionable precedence in such matters, on the part of the crown, were sure to arise, it was clearly foreseen that it would be an easy thing to recur to old practices, whenever the fitting season should arrive.

It is probable that the nearer insight thus obtained into the policy of the papal court, gave a still greater sharpness to the strictures of the reformer on the spirit of that court, and on the conduct of all the parties in this country, who were distinguished as its supporters. It may be too, that the course taken by the Oxford professor in dealing with the questions in debate, had been such as to excite the suspicion and resentment of the agents of that court, and to dispose it to the course to which it committed itself soon afterwards, as his prosecutor.<sup>1</sup>

But, whatever might be the feebleness of the king or of the government, in dealing with such grievances as this embassy was expected to abolish, the country was by no means disposed to remain quiet under the pressure of them. In the parliament of 1376, which obtained the name of the 'good parliament,' these evils were again

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<sup>1</sup> In the exchequer account given in by Wycliffe, he acknowledged £60 received for his expenses 31st. July—charges at 20s. a day, from 27 July, when he embarked in London for Flanders, to 14 Sept. following, on which day he returned, £50—and for the passage and repassage 42s. 3d.; total £52. 2s. 3d. Rymeri Fædera vii. p. 41. Oxford Edition of Wycliffe's Bible, Pref. p. vii.

enforced, and denounced in the boldest language. We can suppose that the statistics of the house of commons then assembled were not strictly accurate, when it was stated in the petition of that assembly, that the kingdom, within the memory of the present generation, had lost not less than two-thirds of its wealth and population ; but it is instructive to observe that the disasters, whether of war abroad, or of pestilence and poverty at home, which were regarded as having changed the condition of the kingdom, to such an alarming extent, are imputed mainly to the mal-practices of popes and cardinals.

In the preamble to their petition, the commons state that the taxes paid to the court of Rome for ecclesiastical dignities, amounted to '*five times more than is paid to the king, from the whole produce of the realm.*' For some 'one bishopric, or other dignity,' the pope is said 'to reserve to himself, by way of translation and death, three 'four, five, several times : and, while for money, the 'brokers of that sinful city, Rome, promote many caitiffs, 'being altogether unlearned and unworthy, to a thousand marks living yearly, the learned and worthy 'can hardly obtain twenty marks, whereby learning decayeth ; aliens and enemies to their land, who never 'saw, nor come to see, their parishioners, having those 'livings, whereby they despise God's service, and convey 'away the treasure of the realm, and are worse than 'Jews or Saracens.' Against all such customs, these sturdy commoners plead 'the law of the church,' which



requires that all such preferments should be disposed of in charity, 'without praying or paying.' They insist that it is the demand of reason, that establishments which owe their origin to devout and humane purposes, should continue to be subservient to religion and hospitality; and they are not afraid to say, 'that God hath given his sheep to the Pope, to be pastured, and not to be shorne or shaven; and that lay-patrons perceiving the simony and covetousness of the Pope, *do thereby learn* to sell their benefices to mere brutes, no otherwise than Christ was sold to the Jews.' By such means, the pontiff is said to derive from England alone, a revenue exceeding that of any prince in Christendom. It is said, accordingly,—'that the Pope's collector, and other strangers, the king's enemies, and only leiger spies for English dignities, disclosing the secrets of the realm, ought to be discharged.' It is added, that the said collector '*keepeth a house in London, with clerks and offices thereto belonging, as if it were one of the king's solemn courts*, transporting yearly to the Pope twenty thousand marks, and most commonly more; that cardinals, and other aliens remaining at the court of Rome, whereof '*one cardinal is dean of York, another of Salisbury, another of Lincoln, another archdeacon of Canterbury, another archdeacon of Durham, another archdeacon of Suffolk, another archdeacon of York, another prebendary of Thane and Massingdom, another prebendary of York* —all these, and divers others, have the best dignities in

‘ England, and have sent over to them yearly twenty  
‘ thousand marks, over and above that which English  
‘ brokers lying here have for themselves ; that the Pope,  
‘ to ransom Frenchmen, the king’s enemies, who defend  
‘ Lombardy for him, doth also *at his pleasure levy a sub-*  
‘ *sidy from the whole clergy of England* ; that for the more  
‘ gain, the Pope maketh sundry translations of bishop-  
‘ rics and other dignities within the realm ; and that *the*  
‘ *Pope’s collector hath this year taken to his use, the first-*  
‘ *fruits of all benefices* ; that it would be good, therefore,  
‘ to renew all the statutes against provisors from Rome,  
‘ since *the Pope reserveth all the benefices of the world as*  
‘ *his own proper gift* ; and hath, within this year, created  
‘ twelve new cardinals, so that now there are thirty,  
‘ whereas there were wont to be but twelve in all, and  
‘ *all the said thirty cardinals, except two or three, are the*  
‘ *king’s enemies.*’

It is further argued from these facts, that the pontiffs, if left without check, may, ere long, proceed to confer the offices of the state upon their creatures, after the manner in which they had ‘ accroached ’ to themselves the appointment of heads to ‘ all houses and corporations ‘ of religion.’ As the only adequate means of protecting the country against a system of usurpation and spolia- tion which must doom it to perpetual poverty, and drain from it the emolument that should be as a bounty upon its learning and piety, it is urged, not only that the pro- visors of the Popes should be rigorously opposed in all

cases, but that ‘no papal collector or proctor should remain in England, upon pain of life and limb, and that no Englishman, on the like pain, should become such collector or proctor, or remain at the court of Rome.’<sup>1</sup>

This is a remarkable document. It shows with enough of clearness, that the papal court had become lost to all sense of shame, in its thirst after lucre; and it shows with no less clearness, that our ancestors of the fourteenth century, were not wanting in the intelligence to discern, nor in the courage to denounce and resist, the mystery of iniquity everywhere at work about them in this form.

Wycliffe—no marvel that thy labours in Burges were lost, or all but lost! There is a point in degeneracy which leaves no place to the hope of amendment. The strong hand—coercion and necessity, are the only restraints to which such delinquency ever submits. England is thy proper field—the free spirit there is to thy purpose; confide in that, and in the truth which underlies it, though at present only dimly seen, or imperfectly articulated.

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<sup>1</sup> Cotton's Abridgment, 128. 59 Edw. II. Foxe's Acts and Monuments, I. 561.





## CHAPTER IX.

### WYCLIFFE AS A CONFESSOR.

**W**YCLIFFE was not forgotten by his sovereign, while employed as one of the royal commissioners. In November 1375, he was presented by the king to the prebend of Aust, in the collegiate church of Westbury, in the diocese of Worcester. About the same time, the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire became vacant. Lord Henry de Ferrars, the patron, was then a minor, and it in consequence devolved on the crown to appoint the next incumbent. In this instance, the patronage of the king was again exercised in favour of Wycliffe.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. 48 Edw. III. p. 1, m. 23. Johan. de Morhouse presbyter per Dominum Henr. de Ferrariis de Groby ad Eccle. de Lutterworth. Inquisitores dicunt, quod dicta Ecclesia incepit vacare ultimo die Decem. ultimo præteriti (1384) per mortem Joannis Wycliff ultimi rectoris ejusdem. Item, dicunt, quod Dominus Henricus de Ferrariis

But the interval which had brought preferment to the Reformer, was not so auspicious to the duke of Lancaster. As we have seen, the fortunes of the war with France had changed. With debt and disaster came popular discontent. The king was suffering from age; Edward, the Black Prince, the heir-apparent, not less so from disease, and thus the cares of government devolved mainly on the duke of Lancaster. At the same time, some of the questions with which he was bound to concern himself, appear to have been of a sort not to admit of being dealt with in a way to conduce to his popularity. The parliament of 1376, by its bold and salutary measures, obtained, as before stated, the title of the 'good parliament.' But much obscurity rests, nevertheless, on the history of that assembly. What was done, appears to have been done with unanimity. Still, there were influential men present who must have assented for some factious or temporary purpose to many things which they did not approve. Courtney, bishop of London, and Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, were not men to sym-

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de Groby est verus patronus, et quod Dominus noster Edwardus tertius Rex, ratione minoris ætatis dicti Domini Henrici de Ferrariis dictum Dominum Johannem Wycliff ultimo presentavit ad eandem. Dictus Johannes Morhouse admissus est 8 Kal. Febru. 1384. Reg. Bokyngham. e col. Ep. Kennet M.S. Rot. Parl. 49 Edw. III. p. 2, m. 8. We may conclude that Wycliffe now resigned the living of Ludgershall, as William Neubuld was rector on the 29 May 1376. Reg. Bokyngham. We have seen that Wycliffe returned from Bruges in Sept. 1374, after an absence of six weeks.

pathize with proceedings which tended greatly to augment the power of the commons ; and still less with the language in which the lower house denounced the rapacity of the papal court, and all the grades of ecclesiastics who did not go along with them in their own policy and feeling on that subject. For the moment, however, even such men went with the stream.

One part of the proceedings of this parliament consisted in a prosecution of certain persons, for alleged mal-practices as servants of the crown. This prosecution is remarkable, as having originated with the commons, and as being conducted by them. The accused were subjected, in several instances, to confiscation and imprisonment. The principal sufferer was Lord Latimer, a known friend of the duke of Lancaster. ‘The policy adopted,’ says Mr. Hallam, ‘in employing the house of commons as an engine of attack against an obnoxious ministry, was perfectly novel, and indicates a sensible change in the character of our constitution. In the reign of Edward II., parliament had little share in resisting the government ; much more was effected by the barons, through the rising of their feudal tenantry. Fifty years of authority better respected, of law better enforced, had rendered these more perilous, and of a more violent appearance than formerly. A surer resource presented itself in the increased weight of the lower house in parliament ; and this indirect aristocratical influence gave a surprising impulse to that assembly, and particularly



‘tended to establish, beyond question, its control over ‘public abuses.’<sup>1</sup>

The most perplexing fact in the history of this parliament, is, that its measures should have been so hostile, directly or indirectly, to the duke of Lancaster. The duke was still at Bruges. He embarked for England early in July. Before his landing, the parliament had excluded him from a place in the government, and among its last acts had withdrawn his power as ambassador. The prince of Wales also—the ornament of chivalry, had breathed his last on a bed of sickness. The king, it appears, was far from being satisfied with the committee which the parliament had appointed to act as his advisers. The parties removed by the authority of that assembly were recalled, and the duke of Lancaster, now his eldest son, was declared his principal associate in the government. Nor was this all. The earl of March, Peter de la Mare, and the bishop of Winchester, all active members of the late parliament, were made to feel the displeasure of the court. Peter de la Mare was imprisoned, and the temporalities of the bishop of Winchester were confiscated.

What we now call sessions of parliament, were, in the time of Edward III, the histories of so many new parliaments. The ‘good parliament’ was dissolved in July 1376, the parliament which succeeded it was assembled

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<sup>1</sup> Hallam's *Middle Ages*, iii. 85.

in January 1377. During this interval, some murmurings arose among the people on account of the course that had been taken towards De la Mare and the bishop of Winchester. But it was soon to become manifest, that among the parties who had seemed to concur in supporting measures of ecclesiastical reformation in the last parliament, were many who had so done, not as being themselves, by any means, reformers, but to remove parties who were in possession of the confidence of the crown from their position. The unnatural coalition had been, for the moment, successful; and when it was seen that the fruit of their labour had come to nothing, and that chiefly through the agency of Lancaster, no pains were spared to turn the resentment of the people against him, on that account. But in the judgment of Lancaster, the reformers had mistaken enemies for friends in the dark, and he flattered himself that he could make it appear, that the enemies of abuses in church and state might find a more trustworthy coadjutor in himself and his friends, than in such men as Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, or Courtney, bishop of London.

The prelate last named, one of the most imperious churchmen of the age, had fully committed himself against Lancaster in the late parliament; and he now proceeded to give proof of the sincerity with which he had joined in the loud denunciations of papal avarice and corruption on the part of the commons, as then assembled, by instituting proceedings of a penal nature

against Wycliffe. The new parliament assembled, as stated, in January 1377; the two houses of convocation were convened on the third of February, in St. Paul's, and one of its first matters of business was, to receive accusations against John de Wycliffe, as a person holding and publishing many erroneous and heretical doctrines. The nineteenth day of the month was fixed for hearing his defence.

Wycliffe was now in the discharge of his duties as professor at Oxford. We may see him in imagination, as this summons from the 'Cæsarian prelates,' assembled in all the state of Convocation, reaches him. Such a proceeding, from such a quarter, does not take him by surprise. It is the kind of trial he has foretold, as the natural result of the course to which he has committed himself. He confers with the wise and trusty on the subject. His resolve is to obey the summons. He will learn what it is that has so much displeased the great personages thus in movement against him. He will deal with their accusations in the place and at the time appointed—as he best may. But the factions of the hour are busy. The clergy, especially, are doing their best to possess the popular mind with prejudices against the Duke of Lancaster. He is, according to the rumour thus set agoing, the chief stay of an obnoxious court and ministry, a most formidable enemy to the just authority of parliament, and so jealous of the citizens of London as to be meditating the suppression of their mayoralty, and a serious abridgment of their liberties in other respects.



The falsehood of this talk, and the special hollowness of it as proceeding from such men, are manifest enough : but at the time, its policy was not so readily detected.

The Duke of Lancaster was not left in ignorance of these proceedings in relation to Wycliffe. Communications, it appears, took place between him and the Reformer. On his arrival in London, Wycliffe is encouraged, both by the duke, and by lord Percy, earl marshal, to meet his enemies without dismay. These noblemen, indeed, promise to accompany him in person. On the morning of the nineteenth of February 1377, you see the priests, the dignitaries, and the prelates, who are to constitute the two houses of this clerical parliament, streaming along the narrow passes that lead to St. Paul's. What is afoot is somewhat noised abroad ; and you see the dependants of these great ones, and others of the populace of London, crowding into the sacred building. The edifice itself is large—larger than the structure which now lifts its head so high on the same site, and is in the old, massive style of Norman architecture. The space open around it also is large, if we bear in mind that it stands in the midst of a city within whose contracted walls ingenuity in the way of package has been tasked to the uttermost. Soon after the prelates have taken their seats, a noise is heard at the entrance. It approaches nearer, until, amidst much disorder and hubbub, a way is opened through the crowd immediately in front of the assembled clergy—and the man John de Wycliffe,

of whom enough had been heard, but whom few there present had seen, stands in their midst, and with a presence of his own which bids fair to be a match for any presence. There you can imagine him—a man rising somewhere above the middle stature. His right hand is raised in the clutch of his tall white staff. His clothing consists of a dark simple robe, belted about the waist, and dropping in folds from the shoulders to the waist, and from the waist to the feet: while above that grey and flowing beard, you see a set of features which speak throughout of nobleness, and which a man might do well to travel far even to look upon. Behind him you see his servant, bearing books and papers, especially *the* book above all books,—ammunition for the battle, if there is to be a field-day. On his one hand is John of Gaunt, eldest son of the king, on the other, lord Percy, earl marshal of England. These were bold men all. But Courtney, the presiding bishop, was also a bold man. He rose in high displeasure, and was the first to speak, when, according to our authority, the following altercation ensued.

*Bishop Courtney.* Lord Percy, if I had known what masteries you would have kept in the church, I would have stopped you out from coming hither.

*Duke of Lancaster.* He shall keep such masteries though you say nay.

*Lord Percy.* Wycliffe, sit down, for you have many things to answer to, and you need to repose yourself on a soft seat.

*Bishop Courtney.* It is unreasonable that one cited before his ordinary, should sit down during his answer. He must and shall stand.

*Duke of Lancaster.* Lord Percy's motion for Wycliffe is but reasonable. And as for you, my lord bishop, who are grown so proud and arrogant, I will bring down the pride, not of you alone, but of all the prelacy in England.

*Bishop Courtney.* Do your worst, sir.

*Duke of Lancaster.* Thou bearest thyself so brag upon thy parents,<sup>1</sup> which shall not be able to keep thee : they shall have enough to do to help themselves.

*Bishop Courtney.* My confidence is not in my parents, nor in any man else, but only in God, in whom I trust, by whose assistance I will be bold to speak the truth.

*Duke of Lancaster.* Rather than I will take these words at his hands, I will pluck the bishop by the hair out of the church.<sup>2</sup>

This last expression as the words indicate, was not addressed to the bishop. It was said in an undertone to Lord Percy, but sufficiently loud to be heard by the

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<sup>1</sup> His father was the powerful Hugh Courtney, Earl of Devonshire, a family which boasted of its descent from Charlemagne.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. Hist. Monachi. D. Albani ex accommodato D. Math. Archiepis. Cant. Foxe's Acts and Mon. i. 558. Fuller's Church Hist. B. iv. art. xiv. Foxe's authority seems to warrant the inference that much more than the above was said, but all to the same effect; and that in this tongue-fight the bishop had the best of it—'Erubuit Dux quod non potuit prævalere litigia.'



people near, who, for the most part, took side with the bishop, and such was the scene of excitement and confusion that followed, that the meeting dissolved, and Wycliffe, who had been a silent witness to this 'pretty quarrel,' retired under the protection of his powerful friends.

We have no reason to suppose that the Reformer would have found any meeting really expressive of the popular feeling in London other than highly favourable to his person and his objects, inasmuch as the historian monk, Walsingham, who deplores what he records, assures us that even at this time the Londoners were nearly all Lollards.<sup>1</sup> But it is manifest that the city authorities

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<sup>1</sup> The following narrative, the date of which is only a little subsequent to that of the narrative in the text, may suffice to indicate that Walsingham was not far wrong in his estimate of the spirit of the Metropolis :—"The Londoners at this time, trusting somewhat boldly to the mayor's authority, who for that year was John of Northampton, *took upon them the office of the bishops*, in punishing the vices (belonging to the civil laws) of such persons as they had found and apprehended as guilty of fornication or adultery. First, they put the women in the prison, which amongst them was named Dokum; and lastly, bringing them into the market-place, where every man might behold them, and cutting off their golden locks from their heads, they caused them to be carried about the streets, with bagpipes and trumpets blown before them, to the intent they should be the better known, and their company avoided—according to the manner of certain thieves that were named *appellatores* (accusers or impeachers of others that were guiltless) which were so served. And with other such like opprobrious and reproachful contumelies did they serve the men also that were taken with them. Here the story (history) recordeth, how the said Londoners were encouraged hereunto by John Wycliffe, and

had become distrustful of the duke, and disaffected towards him, and that this feeling had descended to many among the lowest of the citizens. On the evening of this same day, the palace of the Savoy, where the duke resided, was assailed by a band of riotors, and the arms of the duke were reversed as those of a traitor. The house of Lord Percy was also attacked, and a clergyman said to have been mistaken for the owner of the mansion, was killed by the mob. In these proceedings the mayor and alderman appear to have been in some degree implicated. They are said to have been removed by the influence of the duke, that their places might be supplied by persons deemed more worthy of confidence.

But the nature and the issue of the meeting at St. Paul's, were not such as we could ourselves have desired. We could have wished that the duke and his noble friend had been content, notwithstanding that haughty opening speech of the bishop—which was the cause of the

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others that followed his doctrine, to perpetrate this act, *in reproach of the prelates*. For they said that they did so much abhor to see the great negligence of those to whom that charge belonged; and that they did as much detest their greediness of money, being choked with bribes, and winking at the penalties due to such persons by the laws appointed, suffered such persons favourably to continue in their wickedness." *Hæc ex Chron. D. Albani*. Foxe, Acts and Mon. I. 584—585. Our Puritan Commonwealth has hardly a picture that may be said to be a match for the above. Prynne might have found his nearest possible approach to paradise under such a mayoralty. Collier I. 581.

dissension—with simply claiming to be present during the trial; and that they had shown self-government enough to have abstained from direct interference in behalf of the Reformer, except as some injustice or harshness on the part of his judges might have seemed to demand it. We might then have listened to the recital of the 'erroneous or heretical' opinions ascribed to Wycliffe, and have been witnesses to the manner in which he was prepared to defend himself. We could have spared the debate between Courtney and the noblemen, graphic and suggestive as it is, for something more extended of the same kind as between Courtney and the Reformer.

But, it will not be supposed that the proceedings against Wycliffe could be stayed at this point. It will be remembered, that the meeting at St. Paul's, was on the nineteenth of February, 1377: On the twenty-first of June, in the same year, Edward III. expired. On the afternoon of the following day, Richard, the son of the Black Prince, a youth who had not attained the twelfth year of his age, made his public entry into London. The reign of the late king had been unusually extended, and was such, in many respects, as should not have been reviewed by his subjects without interest and gratitude. But his breath had scarcely departed, when, as commonly happens in such cases, he seemed to be at once and wholly forgotten. The funeral solemnities of the deceased king attracted little attraction, compared with the pageantries



which marked the entrance of his youthful successor into the capital, the day after his decease, and which gave an unprecedented splendour to the ceremony of his coronation three weeks later.<sup>1</sup>

That ceremony took place on the sixteenth of July, and the first parliament under the new king did not assemble until the thirteenth of October. As it included nearly the whole of the members composing the 'good parliament,' it has been presumed that the influence of the duke of Lancaster was rapidly declining. But affairs may have taken such a course from his disgust, as readily as from his weakness. It is certain that the early proceedings of that assembly were stormy, and such as seemed to bode evil for the future. By the commons, it was required that a council of twelve peers should be appointed to confer with them on the business before their house, and that 'my lord of Spain'—a title frequently given to John of Gaunt—should be of the number, and act as president. The young king—of course, by the advice of others—had given his sanction to this proposal. But the duke rose, adverted to the rumours which had been so assiduously circulated touching his loyalty, and attributing those rumours mainly to certain members of the lower house, he remarked that the commons could have no claim on him for advice. While sen-

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<sup>1</sup> Rymer. ii. 159. Walsingham. 195 *et. seq.*

sible to his demerit, he could not forget that he was the son of a king, and one of the first subjects of the crown ; nor would he agree to take any further part in the affairs of the nation, until the imputations cast upon his loyalty should be removed. His ancestors, of either side, had never numbered a traitor among them, nor was he disposed to be the first to bring a stain upon their memory. But while he felt himself thus strongly bound to show himself a good subject, and while it was known that he had more to lose by treason than any second person in the realm, he challenged his accusers to come forth, pledging himself to meet even the poorest knight in single combat, or in any other form, subject to the sanction of his peers. We may imagine the ferment produced by this language. The lords and prelates instantly rose, surrounded the person of the duke, and repeated their assurances, that no living man could regard the calumnies of which he had spoken as being at all other than calumnies. The commons, when it came to their turn to speak, appealed to their conduct in inviting the duke to become their principal adviser, as their best defence ; and Lancaster at length consented to bury the past, on condition of obtaining a severe enactment against the authors of such talk or insinuations in the time to come.<sup>1</sup>

This matter of difference being adjusted, the parlia-

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. III. 386. Walsingham, 198. Rymer. VII. 162.

ment returned with more determination than ever to its former labour, with a view to place some effectual check on the tendency of the papal court to drain the land of its treasures, under religious pretences. The minority of the king, and the rising power of the house of commons, were circumstances eminently favourable to the prosecution of such a policy. As a remedy against the evils which had hitherto resisted every influence opposed to them, it was urged that the procuring of a benefice by papal provision, should be punished with outlawry ; and that the same penalty should be incurred by the man who should farm any of the livings in the English church that had been conferred upon foreigners. It was also urged that the Pope should be prevented making reservations to elective offices in the church in future, ‘ the same being done against his treaty taken with Edward the third ; and that all aliens, as well religious as others, do, by candlemass next, avoid the realm ; and that during the war, all their lands and goods should be applied thereto.’<sup>1</sup> The war adverted to, it should be remembered, was a French war, and most of the foreign ecclesiastics who had ‘ accroached ’ to themselves the treasures of the country, in the shape of revenues from English livings and English dignities, were Frenchmen. These sagacious commoners were not disposed to look tamely on, while the wealth of England passed, in this

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<sup>1</sup> Cotton’s Abridgment, 160, 161.



manner, into hands through which it served indirectly, if not directly, to replenish the treasury of France. The above language, set forth as the grave resolution of parliament, seems to bespeak something like a desperateness of feeling on this subject. Moreover, from a document still existing, we learn that a question to the following purport came up, as a point of discussion in that assembly.

‘Whether the kingdom of England may lawfully, in case of necessity, detain and keep back the treasure of the kingdom, for its own defence, that it be not carried away to foreign and strange nations, the Pope himself demanding and requiring the same, under pain of censure, and by virtue of obedience?’

No scholar of that time needed to be apprized that the bearings of this question were large and manifold. It is said to have been submitted to the judgment of Wycliffe in the name of the king. In his answer to this question, the Reformer states, that he attaches little importance to the decisions of the canon or civil law in relation to such points, or even to the law of England. He deems it enough that he can show the affirmative ‘of this doubt,’ by an appeal to ‘the principles of the law of Christ.’ His first reasonings, however, are designed to show, that the power of self-preservation, which is conferred even on inanimate bodies, in a greater degree on the brute creation, and on the individuals of the human species, must be supposed to have been conferred on the English nation as such, ‘which ought to be one body, the clergy

‘and the commonalty being alike members thereof; ‘and so much the more apparently, by how much the ‘same body is more precious unto God, as being adorned ‘with virtue and knowledge.’ It is thence concluded, that ‘as there is no power given of God to any creature, ‘for any end, that may not be lawfully used to that end, ‘it follows that our kingdom may justly detain its treasure for the defence of itself, in every case where ‘necessity shall appear to require it.’ In attempting the further solution of this problem, he describes every contribution made to the papacy, as being, if rightly viewed, strictly of the nature of alms: and alms, it is contended, are properly bestowed on the recipient, only as he is known to be really needy, and can be justly expected from the donor, only as it shall be alike certain that he is in possession of means beyond what is required by his own necessities. But the wealth of the papal court, it is argued, is known to be far beyond its legitimate wants; while the impoverished condition of this country, compared with the demands made upon its resources, has filled the mind of the wisest with alarm, and is calling forth loud complaints from all quarters.

By such steps, the Reformer endeavoured to conduct his countrymen to the conclusion, that on the grounds both of patriotism and religion, it became them to resist this mercenary policy of the papal court. This systematic seizure of temporal emoluments, under the pre-

tence of spiritual jurisdiction, presented to the mind of Wycliffe such a combination of avarice aggravated by hypocrisy, that he had no words in which adequately to denounce it. It is thus that the somewhat testy and stubborn document under consideration concludes. ' Christ, ' the head of the Church, whom all Christian priests ' ought to follow, lived by the alms of devout women. ' (Luke vii.) He hungered and thirsted ; he was a stranger, ' and many other miseries he sustained, not only in ' his members, but also in his own body, as the Apostle ' witnesseth. He was made poor for our sakes, that ' through his poverty we might be rich. (2 Cor. viii.) ' Whereas, accordingly, in the first endowing of the ' church, whatsoever he were of the clergy that had any ' temporal possessions, he had the same by form of a ' perpetual alms, as both writings and chronicles do ' witness.

' Wherefore, St. Bernard, declaring in his second book ' to Eugenius, that he could not challenge any secular ' dominion by right of succession, as being the vicar of ' St. Peter, writeth thus :—That if St. John should speak ' unto the Pope himself, as St. Bernard doth unto Eugenius, were it to be thought that he would take it ' patiently? But let it be so, that you do challenge ' it unto you by some other ways or means ; but truly ' by any right or title apostolical, you cannot so do, for ' how could he give unto you that which he had not himself? That which he had he gave you, that is to say,



‘ care over the church ; but did he give you any lordship  
‘ or rule? Hark, what he saith—“ Not bearing rule  
‘ as lords over the clergy, but behaving yourselves as  
‘ examples to the flock.” And because thou shalt not  
‘ think it to be spoken only in humility, and not in  
‘ verity, mark the word of the Lord himself in the gos-  
‘ pel, “ The kings of the people do rule over them, but  
‘ you shall not do so.” Here, lordship and dominion is  
‘ forbidden to the Apostles, and darest thou then usurp  
‘ the same? If thou wilt be a lord, thou shalt lose thine  
‘ apostleship ; or if thou wilt be an apostle, thou shalt  
‘ lose thy lordship ; for truly thou shalt depart from the  
‘ one of them. If thou wilt have both, thou shalt lose  
‘ both, or else, think thyself to be of that number, of  
‘ whom God doth so greatly complain, saying, “ They  
‘ have reigned, but not through me ; they have become  
‘ princes, and I have not known it.” Now, if it doth  
‘ suffice thee to rule with the Lord, thou hast thy glory.  
‘ But if we will keep that which is forbidden us, let us  
‘ hear what he saith ; “ He that is the greatest amongst  
‘ you, shall be made as the least ; and he which is the  
‘ highest, shall be as the minister ; ” and for example, he  
‘ set a child in the midst of them. So this, then, is the  
‘ true form and institution of the Apostles’ trade ; lord-  
‘ ship and rule is forbidden, ministration and service  
‘ commanded.’ <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MS. Job. Seldeni. B. 10. Foxe, Acts and Monuments, I. 584.

Thus did the Reformer strike away, as from its lowest root, all pretension to secular dominion on the part of the Christian priesthood as such. In the view of Wycliffe, the revenues of the clergy should consist purely of the free-will offerings of the people. In any attempt to extort wealth by force, they would forego their true character as ministers of Christ. To solve the question propounded, it is enough to look at the New Testament. According to that authority, as well as from the nature of the case, the parliament of England is competent to determine for itself that the treasure of the kingdom shall not pass into the hands of its enemies, under cover of the spiritual pretences set forth after its manner by the papal court. Does our author mean all this? Is not this to discard the received doctrine on church authority, and to substitute the right of private judgment in its place,—at least in so far as all questions of this nature were concerned? It is,—and we have seen that the men sent to parliament by the counties and the towns of England in those days, were, for the most part, men who

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From the manner in which this document is printed in Foxe, it is difficult to determine where the Reformer concludes, and where the Martyrologist begins. On examining the MS. I found it to be as above given—and, accordingly, more important, as well as more extended, than it had appeared to be. Mr. Lewis (*Life of Wiclif*, p. 55,) says this question arose out of a renewed attempt on the part of the pope to collect the tribute called 'Peter's pence,' but Foxe, the authority cited, says nothing of the sort. Peter's pence had been abolished along with the king John tribute.

were not slow to act upon such counsel. They stand out by their bold and free spirit, in edifying contrast to that abject ultramontane school of papists among ourselves, who have descended so low as to make a virtue of their servility, and to glory in their shame !

Our narrative now brings us to the year 1378. Seventeen years have intervened since the rise of Wycliffe's dispute with the mendicants ; ten years have passed since his name became known to the papal court by his appeal in defence of the Wardenship of Canterbury Hall ; and about the same space since his spirited defence of the English parliament in repudiating the tribute paid to the Roman See by king John. The selection of the Reformer as one of the commissioners deputed to meet the papal envoys at Bruges was in 1374 ; and the discussions originated by that embassy extended to 1376. We have sufficient evidence that by the close of this interval, the name of Wycliffe had become very familiar and obnoxious at the papal court ; for about six months later, that is in June 1377, we find the pontiff and his advisers giving themselves to the gravest measures with a view to the suppression of Wycliffe's doctrine, and the control of his proceedings by authority. Five separate instruments, or bulls, were then issued, three addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, one to the king, and one to the university of Oxford. In all these documents, vehement complaint is made about the diffusion of



erroneous and heretical doctrines in this country, and that chiefly through the labours of John Wycliffe. In the first of the letters addressed to the two prelates, the pontiff deplores that England, once so famous for its men of learning, and its defenders of 'the orthodox faith,' should have become so negligent of sacred things, that the secret and open proceedings of the enemies of that faith now became notorious at the papal court, before any tendency towards a correction of them had been manifested in England. By the report of persons truly worthy of credit, it had become known that John Wycliffe, Professor of Divinity, more properly 'a master 'in error,' had proceeded 'to a degree of madness, so 'detestable, as not to fear to assert, dogmatize, and 'publicly to teach, propositions the most false and 'erroneous, contrary to the faith, and tending to weaken 'and subvert the whole church.' It is enjoined, accordingly, that steps be taken to ascertain that the propositions transmitted as those taught by John Wycliffe, have been really taught by him ; and if so, that the usual means be employed '*to commit him to prison,*' and to retain him in '*sure custody,*' until such answer as he may be made to return to the charge of such teaching, shall have been obtained, and judgment given thereupon by the holy see. In the second letter, the same parties are instructed, that should they fail in their attempt to apprehend the said John Wycliffe, or to retain him as a prisoner, they should affix a citation in such public

places as might bring it to his knowledge, requiring him to appear in person before the pope, within three months from the date of such instrument. The prelates are further required, in the third epistle of the pontiff, to use all vigilance, that the king, the prince of Wales, the nobility, and the councillors of the sovereign generally, may not be defiled by the errors so widely propagated ; but that they may rather learn to regard all such opinions as hostile to the foundations of the civil power, no less than to the purity of the Christian faith, and be induced to afford their speedy and effectual assistance to suppress them.

The bull addressed to the king, differs from that sent to the bishops, only as apprizing the monarch of the instructions which had been sent to those dignitaries, and as requiring him, in consistency with his known reverence for the will of the apostolic see, to grant the said prelates his countenance and assistance in discharging the duties imposed on them.

In the official document borne by a special messenger to the chancellor of the University of Oxford, the signs of religious declension in England are again deplored, and the opinions of Wycliffe are again described as being alike adverse to the authority of the church, and to the foundations of civil government. On these grounds, that learned body is called upon, in virtue of the obedience due to the apostolic letters, and on pain of losing all graces, indulgences, and privileges granted to

their university by the holy see,—to prevent the teaching of any such conclusions as had been attributed to John Wycliffe, and to cause the person of that offender, and of all others embracing his errors, to be delivered up in safe custody to the prelates before named. The prelates, also, addressed a joint letter to the chancellor to the same purpose, in the name of the pontiff, requiring that Wycliffe should be made to appear in the church of St. Paul's, London, there to answer in relation to the errors imputed to him. But it is to be observed that the date of the papal letters was, as we have said, in June 1377, while the date of this last letter is as late as the fifteenth of the following January.<sup>1</sup>

This apparent tardiness of procedure admits of explanation. When the papal letters were signed, Edward III. was still living. Ten days later the crown had passed to Richard II.<sup>2</sup> Then came the excitements of the new reign; the renewed protests of parliament against the ambition and avarice of the papal court; and the part taken by Wycliffe in support of that protest, in the argument published by him as an answer to the question which had been submitted to him by the two houses. All these circumstances were unfavourable to immediate action in accordance with the papal rescripts. But when six months had contributed to bring public affairs into more of their ordinary temper, it was thought

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix, G.<sup>2</sup> June 11—21.



the time had come for such action ; and now the letter of the primate and of the bishop of London is sent to Oxford. Still there are impediments. The functionaries of the University, in place of submitting at once to the mandate of the pope, demanded time ; and to the amazement of Walsingham, one of our great lights among the annalists of those times, the said functionaries showed signs of a disposition to repudiate the authority which his holiness had taken upon him in relation to the ancient seat of learning entrusted to their oversight. We have reason to suppose that this hesitancy arose in part from the fact that the men in Oxford who sympathized with Wycliffe, were, as the papal letters supposed, considerable in respect to numbers and influence : and in part from the jealousy with which the papal, and indeed episcopal interference of any kind, was regarded by the Universities in those ages. The decision at length was, that the rescript should be received ; but it was suspiciously done, and we have no reason to think that any hostile measure towards the Reformer was meditated by the authorities at this juncture.

But in the month of April 1378, a synod was convened in Lambeth, before which Wycliffe was summoned to appear, and he was obedient to the summons. The Duke of Lancaster no longer ruled in the cabinet ; but the doctrines of the Reformer had made a powerful impression both on the court and the populace, and events demonstrated the necessity of caution on the part of his

enemies. The people, alarmed for the safety of the accused, surrounded the place of meeting, and forced their way, along with many of the more wealthy citizens, into the chapel where the papal commissioners were assembled, proclaiming before them their attachment to the person and opinions of the Reformer. The dismay created by this tumult was augmented, when Sir Lewis Clifford entered the court, and in the name of the queen-mother forbade the bishops proceeding to any definite sentence in regard to the doctrine or the conduct of Wycliffe. Whereupon, says the historian last cited, the delegates, though vested with all the authority of the apostolic see, 'shaken as a reed with the wind, became soft as oil in their speech, to the open forfeiture of their own dignity, and the injury of the whole church. With such fear were they struck, that you would think them a man who hears not, or one in whose mouth are no reproofs.'<sup>1</sup>

But before matters had come to the pass which filled our monkish friend with so much amazement and indignation, something had been done. In pursuance of the instructions contained in the pope's letters, a paper containing the errors or heresies said to have been promulgated by Wycliffe had been furnished to him ; and in obedience to the same instructions, the Reformer had

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<sup>1</sup> Walsingham. Hist. Aug. 205. Walsingham relates that a tumult of this sort arose some four years later on the trial of Ashton the Lollard.

prepared a paper which was presented as his answer to the charges contained in that document. On this answer, moreover, the synod, sometime in the course of its proceedings, delivered a sort of verdict. But it was a verdict which for the present did not take with it any pain or penalty. It consisted simply of a prohibition,—requiring that the ‘conclusions’ which had come under review should not be again published, either from the pulpit, or in the schools. The inference from this language, of course is, that by this time, such doctrines as are contained in these conclusions had been taught with much freedom by the Reformer, not only in the lectures delivered by him as a professor, but in his discourses as a preacher.

The paper presented by Wycliffe to this synod, has been much misrepresented by his enemies, and much misunderstood by his friends. By his enemies, his explanations have been described as subtle, evasive, and timid. His friends, deceived apparently by the confidence with which such assertions have been made, do not appear to have bestowed upon the statements of this remarkable document the patient attention necessary to a just estimate of its significance. They have judged of it too much from the parts censured by men adverse to the memory of the Reformer. They have not compared those parts with the whole, so as to judge of the whole *from* the whole. Nor have they made a sufficient allowance for the difference in the mode of treating such



questions which is familiar to ourselves, and the mode familiar to the learned among our ancestors some five centuries since. As the contents of this paper have been regarded as presenting the most vulnerable point in the history of the Reformer, we shall give the material portions of it without abridgment, and shall add to them such observations as may serve, with fairness, to bring out its general and real meaning. It is manifest enough, that the men to whose judgment it was submitted, were very far from accounting it harmless ; and we may be sure, that their glances at each other as it was read in their hearing, were by no means of the sort we should describe as bespeaking pleasure or contentment. Some of the opinions expressed had no doubt been often promulgated by men of large and free thought, without bringing any serious penalty upon them ; but others are of such a complexion, that the man giving them utterance must have felt the dangers before him to be of the gravest description.

The introduction to this paper, with its first ‘ conclusion ’ and explanation, read as follows :—

First of all, I publicly protest, as I have often done at other times, that I will and purpose from the bottom of my heart, by the grace of God, to be a sincere Christian ; and as long as I have breath, to profess and defend the law of Christ so far as I am able. And if, through ignorance, or any other cause, I shall fail therein, I ask pardon of God, and do now from henceforth revoke and retract it, humbly submitting myself to the correction of Holy Mother Church. And as for the opinion of children and weak people con-

cerning the faith which I have taught in the schools and elsewhere, and which by those who are more than children has been conveyed beyond the sea, even to the court of Rome—that Christians may not be scandalized on my account, I am willing to set down my sense in writing, since I am prosecuted for the same. Which opinions I am willing to defend even unto death, as I believe all Christians ought to do, and especially the Pope of Rome, and the rest of the priests of the church. I understand the conclusions according to the sense of Scripture and the holy doctors, and the manner of speaking used by them ; which sense I am ready to explain, and if it be proved that the conclusions are contrary to the faith, I am willing very readily to retract them.

I. The first conclusion is, *that all mankind, since Christ's coming, have not power, simply or absolutely, to ordain that Peter and all his successors should rule over the world politically for ever.* And this is plain, as it is not in the power of man to hinder the coming of Christ to the last judgment, which we are bound to believe according to that article of the creed, *From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.* For after that, according to the faith delivered in Scripture, all human polity will be at an end. But I understand that political dominion, or civil secular government, does pertain to the laity, who are actually living, whilst they are absent from the Lord ; for of such a political dominion do the philosophers speak. And although it be styled periodical, (limited) and sometimes *perpetual* (or for ever) ; yet because in the Holy Scripture, in the use of the church, and in the writings of the philosophers, *perpetuum* is plainly used commonly in the same sense as *eternal*, I afterwards suppose that term to be used or taken in that more common signification, for thus the church sings, *Glory be to God the Father, and to his only Son, with the Holy Spirit the Comforter, both now and for ever [in perpetuum.]* And then the conclusion immediately follows on the principles of faith ; since it is not in the power of men to appoint the pilgrimage of the Church to be without end.

Now we can imagine the official personages who sit in conclave on these professed explanations concerning alleged 'heresies and errors,' as being not a little bewildered by what their functionary clerk has read to them. They feel that it would require a shrewdness other than they have brought to the business before them, to detect the heretical or the erroneous in such a statement. 'It means nothing,' they say. Nay, gentlemen, it does mean something. It gives you the literal sense of the words 'for ever,' and it gives you a reason why your popedom cannot be in that sense for ever. Bear with this Oxford schoolman a little. He has his own notion as to the best way of telling his story, and will probably become more explicit before he has done. The next conclusion is read, and it reads thus :—

II. *God cannot give civil dominion to any man for himself and his heirs for ever ; in perpetuum.* By *civil dominion*, I mean that I meant above by *political dominion*, and by *perpetual*, or *for ever*, the same as I did before, as the scripture understands the perpetual or everlasting habitations in the state of blessedness. I said, therefore, first, that God, of his ordinary power, cannot give man *civil dominion* ever. I said, secondly, that it seems probable that God, of his absolute power, cannot give man such a dominion, *in perpetuum*, for ever ; because he cannot, as it seems, always imprison his spouse on the way, nor always defer the ultimate completion of her happiness.

Still, our ecclesiastical friends are in the dark. They read once and again, but the light does not come. 'Does



‘ he,’ says that portly gentleman in prelatie vesture, ‘ does he mean to say no more than that no political dominion in the world can last for ever, seeing that the world itself will not last for ever ; and that the church on earth cannot exist for ever, seeing it is some day to become a church in heaven.’ Even so ; he means to say, that neither civil dominion, nor the church militant, can be in the literal sense everlasting, *because God has purposed otherwise*. This, it must be confessed, is not to say anything very profound, nor anything that may be described as dangerous ; but if borne with it may perhaps lead the way to something much more weighty. Look to the next conclusion :—

III. *Charters of human invention concerning civil inheritance for ever, are impossible*. This is an incident truth. For we ought not to reckon as catholic all the charters that are held by an unjust occupier. But if this be confirmed by the faith of the church, there would be an opportunity given for charity, and a liberty to trust in temporalities, and to petition for them ; for as every truth is necessary, so every falsehood is possible on supposition, as is plain by the testimony of scripture, and of the holy doctors, who speak of the necessity of things future.

And now the little patience left to the amiable persons filling the seat of judgment, fails them entirely. ‘ The meanings before,’ says our prelatie friend, ‘ were trivial, but here there is no meaning.’ The words, it must be owned, are obscure ; but they would not be so, possibly, if taken along with facts—facts which to *you*, at least,

ought not to be unknown. But if the first three in this series of 'conclusions' have proved so barren of material for your purpose, suppose, gentlemen, you pass at once to the last three, and see what may be found there. The last three read thus :—

XVI. *It is lawful for kings, in cases limited by law, to take away the temporalities from churchmen who habitually abuse them.*

This is plain from hence, that temporal lords ought to depend more on spiritual alms, which bring forth greater plenty of fruit, than on alms for the necessities of the body : that it may happen to be a work of spiritual alms to correct such clergymen as damage themselves, soul and body, by withholding from them the temporalities. The case the law puts is this,—when the spiritual head or president fails in punishing them, or that the faith of the clerk is to be corrected, as appears XVI. p. 7. Filiis, 40 di.

XVII. *If the pope, or temporal lords, or any others, shall have endowed the church with temporalities, it is lawful for them to take them away in certain cases, viz., when the doing so is by way of medicine to cure or prevent sins, and that notwithstanding excommunication, or any other church censure, since these donations were not given but with a condition implied.* This is plain from hence, that nothing ought to hinder a man from doing the principal works of charity necessarily, and that in every human action the condition of the divine good pleasure is necessarily to be understood, as in the civil law. *Collationis Decorandi*, c. in fine *Collationis* 10. We added to this seventeenth article, God forbid that, by these words, occasion should be given to the temporal lords to take away the goods of fortune to the detriment of the church.

XVIII. *An ecclesiastic, ever the pope of Rome himself, may, on some accounts, be corrected by their subjects, and for the benefit of the church*

*be impleaded by both clergy and laity.* This is plain from hence, that the pope himself is capable of sinning, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, as is supposed, saving the sanctity, humility, and reverence due to so worthy a father. And since he is our peccable brother, or liable to sin as well as we, he is subject to the law of brotherly reproof; and when, therefore, it is plain that the whole college of cardinals is remiss in correcting him for the necessary welfare of the church, it is evident that the rest of the body, which, as it may chance, may chiefly be made up of the laity, may medicinally reprove him and implead him, and reduce him to live a better life. This possible case is handled, *Diss. 40, Si papa fuerit a fide devius.* For as so great a lapse ought not to be supposed in the lord pope without manifest evidence; so it ought not to be presumed possible that where he does so fall, he should be guilty of so great obstinacy as not humbly to accept a cure from his superior with respect to God. Wherefore many chronicles attest the facts of that conclusion. God forbid that truth should be condemned by the church of Christ, because it sounds ill in the ears of sinners and ignorant persons; for then the whole faith of the scripture would be liable to be condemned.

Monk and mendicant, bishop and subordinate, look strangely and variously at each other, as sentence after sentence of these statements are read. You hear no more about obscure meanings, or little meanings. The meaning here is manifest enough, and sweeping enough. 'Is it so then,' saith a hard-featured dignitary on the left of the chair, 'is it so, that we, the clergy, the divinely-appointed teachers of the laity, are henceforth to be subject—subject as to property and character, to the judgment of the laity? Is it so, that temporal lords are to determine when



‘ we do rightly use, and when we do abuse, our temporalities ; and is it to pertain to them to say when we do hold our revenues with a just title, and when we should be deprived of them ? Nay more—is it for the laity to say when our power of ‘ binding and loosing,’—when our ‘ benedictions or our censures, as God’s ministers, are to be accounted as from God, or as only from man ? Above all, is this defiance of the weapons of the church to be carried so far—is this putting of those who should be ruled in the place of those who should rule, to become so monstrous, that even the sovereign pontiff is to be impleaded, and forced by an authority made up, it may be, ‘ chiefly of the laity,’ to what such men may choose to call ‘ a better life.’ ” Yes, gentle sir, it has come to that. Wycliffe means all that. In so far as his opinions and his wishes may prevail on such questions, he would have the temporal power, be lord over all temporalities ; and to that *régime* would he gladly subject your whole order, from the pope downwards. Yes—and concerning the life which your order should live, no less than concerning the temporalities that should be at your disposal, he would have the lay judgment, in his supposed case, be the ultimate judgment—requiring the laity to become reformers of the clergy, where the clergy fail to become the reformers of themselves. He would, moreover, have men little heedful of your blessing or cursing, except as they can themselves see that you bless only where God has blessed, and that you curse only where

God has cursed. If you doubt this, go back to the remainder of the conclusions before you, and you will find that from the vii. to the xv. they all treat on this subject, and treat of it in this temper. Read ! Read !

That hard-featured man to the left of the chairman—evidently a man of some status in church affairs—is again upon his legs ; and with a warmth of utterance by no means abated, he thus speaks,—‘ Oh ! evil times, ‘ when errors so fatal to all authority, are published ‘ abroad—published not only in the hearing of the com- ‘ mon people, but from the chair of a professor of divinity ‘ in our venerated University of Oxford. Let it be once ‘ thought by the people, that our binding and loosing is ‘ as devoid of all real power as this depraved paper sets ‘ forth, and, its value being wholly gone, most surely ‘ the use of it, in any form, will naturally die away. ‘ If our benediction or our anathema does not in any ‘ case make a man other than the man has already made ‘ himself by his own acts, is not this to say that our ‘ whole scheme of absolution and excommunication *does* ‘ nothing, and *is* nothing ? ’ Truly, reverend sir, the case is as you understand it, bad as that may seem. The man impleaded before you as a heretic and a false teacher, means by what he has said in that paper, and by what he is saying elsewhere, to do his best towards taking the souls of men out of your hands. He has within him a loathing—a loathing that will ere long become deeper, of the bad uses to which you are constantly

applying that pretended authority of yours over the invisible world. He pays little heed to your canon-law ; he would have men put their natural conscience in the place of it—to fear God and to do his will, and to fear displeasure from a priest only when their consciences shall tell them that it is an echo of the displeasure of God. If you think that you *do* send men to perdition, as often as for your own trivial or selfish reasons you affect so to do, then in the view of the man you have arraigned as a culprit, you are all ‘ children of the fiend,’ having lost the compassions proper to men. If you *not* think that your curse does really entail such horrible things, then are you, in his view, ‘ pharisees and hypocrites,’ because you affect so to believe, while you do not so believe. You may gather thus much from what he has now committed to writing and placed in your hands, and the time is at hand in which he will speak thus with an explicitness not to be mistaken.

All honor, say we, to the heart, which, in the face of such perils, levelled a blow so potent against that most terrible of all thraldoms—the thraldom of the soul. And shame, say we, to those blind and ungrateful protestants, who have failed to give to this extraordinary man the praise due to this rare honesty and bravery !

But, whatever may have been the judgment of the pope’s commissioners at Lambeth, in respect to the conclusions and explanations thus laid before them, they were prohibited by the pontiff from acting upon it, and



even from publishing it until the result of the investigation should have been transmitted to the papal court, and judgment pronounced upon it there. This escape of the Reformer from the power of his enemies, though probably for a season only, was interpreted by himself and his disciples as a triumph ; and the circumstance appears to have provoked the attack of an anonymous divine, described by the Reformer as a ' motley Theologian,' who would seem to have given himself with much zeal to a vindication of the infallibility of the pontiff. The pope he affirmed to be incapable of mortal sin ; insisting that whatsoever his holiness should ordain, must be true and just. In reply, Wycliffe observes, that if this doctrine were admitted, the pope might remove any book from the canon of Holy Writ, and introduce any novelty into its place ; might alter the entire Bible, and convert even the scriptures into heresy, establishing as Catholic truth tenets the most contrary to that truth. On Wycliffe's principle, the pope *might* err, even to that extent ; and according to the principle of his antagonist, *should* his holiness so do, even in that case his authority must not be disputed.

The Reformer then adverts to the attempts made by the pontiff to arm the authority of the hierarchy, of the court, and of the university against him, as the penalty of his presuming to question this dogma concerning the infallibility of the pope, and some others not less adverse to the interests of truth and piety. He makes men-

tion, moreover, of the fact, that the papal delegates who sat in judgment on his conclusions at Lambeth, were then waiting to learn the decision of the papal court concerning them; and he states for their information, that according to the report which has reached him, the doctrine he has avowed in relation to the liability of the pope to fall, like other men, into error and sin; and in relation to the authority of temporal lords over all the goods of the church—had been pronounced as in a high degree heretical. Passing from his doctrine on these points, to his avowed opinions concerning the supposed power of absolution; and presuming that in respect to this topic, the conclusion would be, that the pope, and the clergy generally, do really bind and loose, whenever they affect so to do, his indignation waxes strong.

The man who should thus proclaim himself as equal with God, he describes as a heretic and a blasphemer—as a delinquent whom Christians ought not in any way to acknowledge, assuredly not as their spiritual leader, since to follow such guidance must be to pass blindfold to destruction. Secular lords are urged, accordingly, to resist the arrogant claims of the pope; and to do so, not merely in respect to the heresy which the pontiff had endeavoured to impose on them by declaring them incompetent to withdraw their alms from a delinquent church; nor merely because that same authority had pronounced it heretical to affirm that any distribution of the goods of the church by the court of Rome, must

be dependent on confirmation by the civil power—but still more, because it had been the great work of the See of Rome, to deprive them of the liberty assigned them by the law of Christ, and to subject them to an Egyptian bondage in its stead. No fear of suffering, therefore, no thirst of gain, no love of distinction, should prevent the soldiers of Christ, as well laymen as clergy, from appearing in defence of the law of God, even unto death. Should the lord pope himself, or an angel from heaven, lay claim to the certain and absolute power of absolving, which belongs only to God, every man in the great Christian commonwealth should strive to the utmost for ‘the saving of the faith,’ and the destruction of such error. The substance of the Reformer’s reasoning in this treatise, on the natural bearings of such power wherever assumed, is as follows—

‘Let it once be admitted, that the pope, or one representing him, does indeed bind or loose whenever he affects to do so, and how shall the world stand? When the pontiff pretends to bind all who oppose him in his acquisition of temporal things, either movable or immovable, with the pains of actual damnation, if such persons assuredly are so bound,—it must follow, as among the easiest of things, for the pope to wrest unto himself all the kingdoms of the world, and to subject or destroy every ordinance of Christ. And since, for a less fault than this usurpation of a divine power, Abiathar was deposed by Solomon, Peter was reproved to



‘ the face by Paul—nay, and many popes have been de-  
‘ posed by emperors and kings, what should be allowed  
‘ to prevent the faithful from uttering their complaints  
‘ against this greater injury done to their God? For on  
‘ the ground of this impious doctrine, it would be easy  
‘ for the pope to invert all the arrangements of the world ;  
‘ seizing, in connection with the clergy, on the wives, the  
‘ daughters, and all the possessions of the laity, without  
‘ opposition ; inasmuch as it is their saying, that even  
‘ kings may not deprive a churchman of aught, neither  
‘ complain of his conduct, let him do what he may,  
‘ —while obedience must be instantly rendered to what-  
‘ ever the pope may decree ! ’

It must be remembered, that the ‘ conclusions,’ propositions, or articles of impeachment as we may call them, upon which Wycliffe was required to give explanation and answer at Lambeth, consisted of so many sentences culled from his writings or discourses by his enemies, and transmitted by them as matters of accusation against him to the papal court. The paper given to the papal delegates, presents, as we have seen, Wycliffe’s explanations of the sense in which he either holds or rejects the opinions attributed to him. His aim in the above reply to his ‘ motley ’ assailant, is to vindicate his doctrine, as he had himself stated it before the delegates. Having now learnt that the most material of his opinions had been condemned by the papal court as being in a special degree false and pernicious, he sees clearly, that in obedience to

earnest injunctions and exhortations from the pope and his court, a more severe prosecution is likely to be very speedily instituted against him. With this prospect before him, he appears to have sent forth a copy of the 'conclusions' charged upon him, with his answers attached to them.<sup>1</sup> In this second paper, however, while the substance of the answers presented to the delegates is retained, there are some variations, both in the way of omission and enlargement, and its language, as opposed to the pretensions of the pontiff and his instruments, is somewhat bolder. In short, this second paper appears to have been published, that the grounds in which the Reformer rested his opinions, and the merits of the prosecution which he regarded as awaiting him, might be as widely known as possible. Concerning the pontiff, he does not hesitate to express himself in this paper as follows. 'Let him not be ashamed to perform the ministry of the church, since he is, or at least ought to be, the servant of the servants of God. But a prohibition of reading the sacred scriptures, and a vanity of secular dominion, and a lusting after worldly appearances, would seem to partake too much of a disposition towards the blasphemous advancement of Antichrist, especially while the truths of a scriptural faith are reputed tares, and said to be opposed to Christian truth, by certain leaders who arrogate that we must abide by their

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix H.

‘ decision respecting every article of faith, notwithstanding they themselves are clearly ignorant of the faith of the scriptures. But by such means there follows a crowding to the court (of Rome) to purchase a condemnation of the sacred Scriptures themselves as heretical, and thence come dispensations contrary to the articles of the Christian faith.’ The closing paragraph of this paper reads thus :

‘ These conclusions have I delivered, as a grain of faith, separated from the chaff by which the ungrateful tares are set on fire. These, opposed to the scriptures of truth, like the crimson blossom of foul revenge, provide sustenance for Antichrist. Of this the infallible sign is, that there reigns in the clergy a Luciferian enmity and pride, consisting in the lust of domination, the wife of which is covetousness of earthly things, breeding together the children of the fiend, the children of evangelical poverty being no more. A judgment of the fruit thus produced, may be formed also from the fact, that many, even of the children of poverty, are so degenerate, that either by what they say, or by their silence, they take the part of Lucifer, not being able to stand forth in the cause of evangelical poverty ; or not daring, in consequence of the seed of the Man of Sin sown in their hearts, or from a low fear of forfeiting their temporalities.’

The statements, however, which he now published, he avows himself ready to defend ‘ even to the death, if by



‘such means he might reform the manners of the ‘church.’<sup>1</sup>

We can suppose that Wycliffe would often be made sensible that with every feeling of being engaged in a honest and good cause to sustain him, it is in the nature of such conflicts as had now become familiar to him, to make a large demand on the strength both of mind and body. Judging from his portrait as transmitted to us by Sir Antônio More, it is manifest that Luther had greatly

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Lingard (*Hist. Eng.* III. 257 *et seq.*) wishes it to be believed that this second paper of explanations was, in fact, the first, and that the paper given to the papal delegates was a statement greatly softened by the Reformer through fear. This representation, however, is made, not merely without evidence, but against evidence. If the Reformer *had* given publicity to this second paper prior to his appearance at Lambeth, what could have been more easy than to have convicted him of having so done by producing the document itself? Was Wycliffe a man to have denied what he must have seen it would be utterly vain to deny. We may add, also, that as regards the strength of the opinions avowed, the two papers are in substance the same. What we regard as the second is quite as much open to the charge of evasion as the first, and what we regard as the first is quite as much open to the charge of ‘error and heresy’ as the second. Any man of intelligence and candour, on reading the paper handed to the delegates—if at all acquainted with the state of religious opinion in the fourteenth century—must feel that the charge of a want of courage must be one of the last that could be applicable to its author. Dr. Lingard was a learned and able man; but a tissue of more thorough special pleading was never woven together than is presented throughout his history, wherever the supposed credit of his church, or rather of his order, is concerned. His work will live, but it will be purely from its giving the Romanist *side* of English history, with as much of learning and skill as the thorough *advocate* may be expected to bring to it.

the advantage of him in respect to physical organization. In the countenance of the Englishman, there are indications of a greater degree of penetration and acuteness, and of a finer sensibility, than we discern in the physiognomy of the German. But in the latter, there is a massiveness of form, a robustness, a leonine force, which are his own, not only as compared with Wycliffe, but as compared with nearly all his compeers in the work to which his might was devoted. We have reason to think that the events of 1377 and 1378, together with the severe labour to which Wycliffe gave himself—as we shall show in another place—in the time immediately subsequent, laid the foundation of the malady, which at no very distant day was to bring all his care and toil to an end. We learn that the sickness which befel the Reformer at this period, was such as to leave little prospect of his recovery. Such, too, it appears, was the force of religious prepossessions in the fourteenth century, that some of his old antagonists, the mendicants, could not avoid supposing that a heretic so notorious must needs be most miserable in the near approach of death. Possibly he might be disposed in such a crisis—limb of Satan as he had been—to repent him of his evil deeds, or to recant some of his errors, and thus to make some reparation for the mischiefs he had perpetrated. Wycliffe was in Oxford when this sickness arrested him and confined him to his bed. Then it was, that four doctors, who were called regents, representing the four orders of

friars, were deputed to wait on their expiring enemy. With these most religious persons, the same number of civil officers, called senators of the city and aldermen of the wards, were associated. When these persons entered the apartment of the sick man, his head was reclining on his pillow. Some expressions of sympathy were dropped, and something was said about hope that he might recover. But it was presently intimated that, at such a season, it was presumed that he could not but be alive to the many wrongs which the whole mendicant brotherhood had experienced at his hands ; and as it was now probable that death was about to put an end to his course, it was only charitable to conclude that he would be willing to confess himself penitent, and that, with a due Christian humility, he would be prepared to revoke whatever he had said to the injury of fraternities so eminent in learning, sanctity, and usefulness. Wycliffe remained motionless and silent until this address was concluded. He then beckoned to his servant to raise him in his bed. This done, he fixed his eyes on the said doctors and aldermen, and with all his remaining strength exclaimed, ‘ *I shall not die, but live, and again declare the evil deeds of the Friars.*’ The divines and the civilians, having looked strangely at each other, retreated, as we can imagine, in no little disappointment and dismay. Such, in substance, is the story which tradition has handed down to us. The picture it presents is eminently characteristic of the parties composing it, and of the



times with which it is connected. The words which sufficed to confound and repel so much learning, and so much civic dignity, were not words to be soon forgotten in the talk and memories of Oxford.<sup>1</sup>

The persecutions to which the Reformer found himself exposed, as the consequence of extending his speculations so far, did not prevent his extending them further. His opinions had trenched already on some of the most accredited and the most profitable doctrines of the church—as in reference to confession, excommunication, and absolution. Soon after 1378, he took new ground in relation to the doctrine of the Eucharist, rejecting the then orthodox dogma of Transubstantiation.

Until about the middle of the ninth century, the manner in which the body and blood of Christ may be supposed to be present in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, was the subject of a comparatively peaceful difference of opinion among persons holding the highest offices in the church. But in the twelfth century, the advocates of the astounding dogma which then began to be known by the name of Transubstantiation, grew to be both numerous and powerful. The progress of this doctrine, however, was far from being uninterrupted. Among its opponents in that age, the most conspicuous place must be assigned to Berengarius, a Gallic prelate, whose learning

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<sup>1</sup> Baleus De Script. Brit. 369. Lewis. c. IV. 82.

and genius were much above the level of his times. His doctrine was in substance that of the primitive church, and of the more enlightened among protestant communities in our own day. The zeal and ability with which he maintained it, affected the church of the west in all its branches. A large and influential portion of the clergy became his determined opponents, but his avowed disciples were many and considerable. Judgment against his opinions was given by the papacy, and by a council assembled at Paris. The king of France sympathized with these proceedings, and deprived the offending prelate of his episcopal revenues. Thrice was he compelled to appear in Rome; and as often was his doctrine formally renounced, only to be avowed anew as the prospect of impunity returned. Towards the close of life he retired from the stormy scenes, which, for more than thirty years, had been familiar to him; and the remembrance of the indecision which had cast its shade upon his history, is said to have embittered his seclusion. But he died with the reputation of a man of piety, and his doctrine never ceased to find disciples.

By the Vaudois and the Albigenses the scriptural doctrine on this subject appears to have been maintained, without interruption, from the early ages of the church. In the middle age, they were often charged with holding the heresy of Berengarius. But their faith in the Eucharist, though greatly strengthened by the labours of that prelate, was not derived from him. It is not surprising,

however, that this should have been asserted, so striking is the similarity of the reasoning opposed to the tenet of Transubstantiation in the two cases. From the fragments of their writings which remain, it is manifest that if the sectaries of the valleys of Piedmont were the disciples of that master, they were disciples not unworthy of him. From one of their adversaries we learn, that they were accustomed to appeal to the Apostles' Creed, and to the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, as containing every essential article of Christian doctrine, expressing their surprise that in those symbols of religious truth, no reference should be made to Transubstantiation—if that be indeed a truth. They are described also, as exposing the inherent and insuperable difficulties of the tenet, with a severity of criticism which must greatly have bewildered their antagonists; urging, with readiness and skill, almost every question tending to involve the topic in contradiction or absurdity.<sup>1</sup>

But we are especially concerned to know the history of this doctrine in England. Our Saxon ancestors were sufficiently obedient in most things to the opinions and customs which came to them recommended by the authority of Rome. Some of their spiritual guides spoke, beyond doubt, in strong language, concerning the supposed presence of Christ in the Eucharist. But their language in this connexion is not more open to exception,

<sup>1</sup> Mosheim, Cent. x, xi. Allix's Churches of the Albigenses.



than are the expressions to be found in a number of Protestant hymns at this day. We have, moreover, the most decisive proof that the dogma intended by the term Transubstantiation, was no part of the national creed in the tenth century. The term itself was then unknown. The new word did not come until the new conception had made it necessary that it should come. Elfric, a contemporary of St. Dunstan, and an ecclesiastic of much celebrity in his time, has spoken in some of his epistles concerning the elements of the Eucharist in a manner which, incidentally, but most distinctly, repudiates the idea which subsequently became the received doctrine of the church. This letter was addressed to Wulfstan, Archbishop of York ; and as its translation into the vernacular language was in compliance with the request of that prelate, it must be admitted as a document of no mean authority. According to this writer, the ‘ housel (host) ‘ is Christ’s body, not bodily, but spiritually. Not the ‘ body which he suffered in, but the body of which he ‘ spake when he blessed the bread and wine, a night before his sufferings. The Apostle,’ he observes, ‘ has said ‘ of the Hebrews, that they all did eat of the same ghostly ‘ meat, and they all did drink of the same ghostly drink. ‘ And this he said, not bodily, but ghostly. Christ being ‘ not yet born, nor his blood shed, when that the people ‘ of Israel ate that meat, and drank of that stone. And ‘ the stone was not (a stone) bodily, though he so said. ‘ It was the same mystery in the old law, and they did

‘ghostly signify that Gospel housel of our Saviour’s body  
‘which we consecrate now.’

In a homily by this same Elfric, ‘appointed in the reign of the Saxons, to be spoken unto the people at Easter,’ the doctrine of the writer, and of the Anglo-saxon clergy generally on this subject, is still more explicitly presented.<sup>1</sup> Our good abbot there repeats his allusion to the manna and the rock in the wilderness; and speaks of the bread in the Christian sacrament, as being no more the body of Christ, than the waters of baptism may be said to be the Holy Spirit. In describing the difference between the body in which Christ suffered, and the body which is hallowed in the bread, he says, the one was born of Mary, while the other is formed from a gathering together of many corns, and that ‘nothing, therefore, is to be understood therein bodily, but all is to be understood ‘ghostly.’ The bread, described as having a bodily shape, is again contrasted with the body of Christ, which is said to be present only in the sense of a ‘ghostly might.’ The body, moreover, in which Christ rose from the dead, never dieth, but the consecrated bread, that is temporal, not eternal. The latter is divided into parts, and some re-

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<sup>1</sup> The printed copy bears the following title:—‘A Testimonie of Antiquitie, showing the ancient faythe in the Church of England touching the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord, here publicly preached, and also received in the Saxon tyme, above six hundred years ago. Printed by John Day, beneath St. Martyn’s. Cum privilegio Regiæ Maiestatis, 1537.’

ceive a larger portion, and some a less ; but the body of Christ ' after a ghostly mystery,' is undivided and equally in all. This series of distinctions the writer brings to a close, by observing, that the signs appealing to the senses in the Eucharist, are a pledge and figure of truth, while the body of Christ is truth itself. This document suggests that the tendencies in favour of such views of the Eucharist as were afterwards denoted by the term Transubstantiation, were considerable, even in those early times ; but it at the same time shows the general and steady effort then made, under the highest authority, to preclude such conceptions, as savouring of superstitious novelty.

By the Conquest, the political influence of the pontiffs in this island, was, for a while, materially impeded. But Lanfranc, who filled the see of Canterbury under the Conqueror, was the most distinguished opponent of Berengarius : and from that time to the age of Wycliffe, the doctrine of the Eucharist, as expounded by Lanfranc, came to be the received doctrine of the Anglian church. It should be added, that the persecution of Wycliffe, on the ground of alleged heresy concerning the Eucharist, dates from 1381, and extends over that year and the following. About three years had then intervened, since the appearance of the Reformer before the Convocation in St. Paul's, and before the Papal Commissioners in Lambeth. Before the close of those three years, his opinions opposed to the doctrine of Transubstantiation had been freely published, not only in his lectures in Oxford,



but to the people generally from the press and the pulpit. 'Many,' he writes, 'are the errors into which we have fallen, with regard to the nature of this outward sacrament. Some for example say, that it is a quality without a substance.<sup>1</sup> Others say that it is a nonentity, since it is an aggregate of many qualities, which are not all of one genus. *Against these opinions I have many a time inveighed, both in the language of the schools, and of the common people.* For of all the heresies that have ever sprung up in the church, I think there is not one more artfully introduced by hypocrites, or one imposing such manifold fraud upon the people. It repudiates the Scriptures; it wrongs the people; it causes them to commit idolatry.'<sup>2</sup> The material of the fourth book of the Trialogus, in which the Reformer so speaks, must have been thrown into the shape in which it has come down to us in the latter part of 1382, or in 1383. We are safe, however, in regarding the chapters of this treatise which relate to the Eucharist, as giving us the substance of his lectures upon it as professor. Assisted thus, we can again take our place among the pupils of the Reformer, and listen to his discoursings. It is sufficiently clear, that subsequently to 1378, the Reformer began to be sceptical concerning the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and that in 1381 he had formally and pub-

<sup>1</sup> I use these words instead of the old logical terms, 'accident without a subject.'

<sup>2</sup> Trialogus. B. iv. c. 2.

licly renounced that doctrine. But at the same time, the scholastic subtleties, and the scholastic forms of expression, which had grown up along with the controversy relating to this tenet, have left considerable obscurity on some of his statements—obscurities which his enemies have not failed to interpret so as to convey a false impression to the mind of the uninitiated. It is a material fact, however, in relation to this entire chapter in the life of Wycliffe, that there is nothing in the language used by him in the confessions made from time to time in the presence of his prosecutors, which will not be found upon enquiry to have been the language generally used by him on the same subjects. There is no seeming want of consistency or relationship in his statements on such special occasions, that cannot be shown to belong to his statements in relation to the same topics on all occasions. Such defect, or such obscurity, may have resulted from the want of greater light, and of a more complete emancipation from the forms of the schools; but we have yet to learn that it resulted in any case from the want of greater integrity, or of greater courage.

Return to your place, then, honest reader, in the lecture-room of the Reformer. Secure for yourself the position from which you may look on the crowd of young, but earnest thinkers, gathered there in the sessions of 1379 and 1380. Some are there now, as always, who are not admirers of the doctrine taught—men more disposed to catch the professor in his words, than to profit by his

wisdom ; men whose timid and selfish instincts always tell them to reverence the past ; and that, for them, the safer and the more convenient course must be never to hazard any movement which has not been so often made as to have obtained good conventional settlement. But all are not of that make—the majority are not. By some means, those young men before you, roughly accommodated as they seem to be in most respects, have learnt to think, that, along with the many things of the past which it would be well to learn, there are things which it would be well to unlearn—much there to approve, much also that needs, greatly needs to be amended. You gather thus much from those signs of interest and intentness, which you see coming up over those features, whenever some new, bold, and it may be rather heterodox conception is well put from the chair. We can imagine, for example, the interest with which a passage like the following would be listened to.

‘ As the words of scripture tell us, that this sacrament  
‘ *is* the body of Christ, not that it *will* be, or that it is  
‘ sacramentally a *figure* of the body of Christ ; so, accord-  
‘ ingly, we must admit without reserve, on this authority,  
‘ that the bread, which is the sacrament, is truly the  
‘ body of Christ. But the simplest layman will see that  
‘ it follows, that inasmuch as this *bread* is the body of  
‘ Christ, it is therefore *bread*, and remains bread—being  
‘ at once both bread *and* the body of Christ.

‘ Again—the point may be illustrated by examples of



‘ the most palpable description. It is not necessary,  
‘ on the contrary it is repugnant to fact, that a man  
‘ when once raised to the dignity of lordship or prelacy,  
‘ should cease to be the same man. The man, as to his  
‘ substance, continues in all respects the same, though  
‘ in a certain sense elevated. So we are required to  
‘ believe that this bread becomes, by virtue of the sacra-  
‘ mental words, and the consecration of the priest, truly  
‘ the body of Christ, and that the bread no more ceases  
‘ to be bread, than that the man ceases to be the same  
‘ man, in the case above supposed. The nature of bread  
‘ is not destroyed by what is so done, it is only elevated  
‘ so as to become a substance more honored. Do we  
‘ believe that John the Baptist when made by the word of  
‘ Christ to be Elias, ceased to be John—or ceased to be  
‘ anything that he was in substance before? In the  
‘ same manner, the bread, while becoming through the  
‘ virtue of Christ’s words the body of Christ, does not  
‘ cease to be bread. For when it has come to be *sacra-*  
‘ *mentally* the body of Christ, it is still bread substan-  
‘ tially. For thus Christ saith, ‘ *this is my body,*’ and  
‘ these words must be taken as the words about the  
‘ Baptist.—And if you will receive it, *this is* Elias. Christ  
‘ does not, to avoid equivocation, contradict the Baptist  
‘ when he declares ‘ I am *not* Elias.’ The one means to  
‘ say that he *was* Elias *figuratively*, the other that he  
‘ *was not* Elias *personally*. And so in the case of those  
‘ who admit that this sacrament is *not* naturally the body

‘ of Christ, but insist that it *is* figuratively Christ’s body, ‘ there is in reality no contradiction, but simply the use ‘ of the same words in two senses.’<sup>1</sup>

Entry is here made by the note-takers of two things :—first, that the substance called bread before the words of consecration, remains bread after consecration :—second, that while the bread thus remains bread, it becomes in some sense, as bread, the body of Christ. The bread is not transubstantiated, for then it would cease to be the substance called bread : nor is it reduced to a congeries of qualities without a *substance* of any kind to sustain them, for then the bread would be annihilated,—become ‘ nothing.’ The words ‘ this is my body,’ says the lecturer emphatically, have their meaning ; but he adds—and with a significance of manner that would be readily understood,—it is not the idiot-meaning which some men would attach to them. The bread upon the altar is to the last truly bread ; and in a sense as truly the body of Christ :—the sense in which it is bread being the *natural* sense, the sense in which it is the body of Christ being the *figurative* sense,—as when our Lord said to John,—‘ This is Elias.’ But let us hear our professor further.

‘ Now there are three modes of predication concerning ‘ this sacrament,—the formal, the essential, and the figurative. Let us here attend to the last. It is according

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<sup>1</sup> Trialogus. B. iv. c. 3.

‘ to this mode that Christ, as I have before said, calls  
‘ John the Baptist Elias. The Apostle says of Christ (2  
‘ Cor. x.) when deducing a moral from the old law, that  
‘ Christ was that rock. And in Genesis xii. the scripture  
‘ asserts that seven ears of corn, and seven fat kine, *are*  
‘ the seven years of fertility. And, as St. Augustine  
‘ observes, the scripture does not say,—are the *signs* of  
‘ those years, but that they are *the years* themselves.  
‘ And you will meet with such forms of expression con-  
‘ stantly in scripture. In such expressions, what is said,  
‘ without doubt, is said figuratively.—After such manner  
‘ the sacramental bread is especially the body of the  
‘ Lord, since Christ himself hath authoritatively declared  
‘ it so to be.’<sup>1</sup> Of the manner in which men ignore all  
the evidence of the senses, and all the perceptions of the  
mind, by attempting to fix a literal meaning on such  
metaphorical expressions, our professor thus speaks, ‘ It  
‘ is not reasonable to suppose that God can have designed  
‘ to put confusion on that intelligence which he has  
‘ himself implanted in our nature. Of all the external  
‘ senses that God has bestowed on man, touch and taste  
‘ are the least liable to err in the judgment they give.  
‘ But this heresy would overturn the evidence of these  
‘ senses, and without cause : surely the sacrament which  
‘ does that must be a sacrament of Antichrist. With  
‘ regard to the evidence of touch, the certainty of experi-

<sup>1</sup> Trialogus. B. iv. c. 6.



‘ment, which the heretic will not deny, shows us that  
‘this consecrated bread when newly baked, differs in its  
‘manner of breaking, in the degree of brittleness, and  
‘the sort of sound produced in breaking it, from bread  
‘that is stale, and which is of greater toughness in damp  
‘weather. Now qualities of this sort,—hardness, soft-  
‘ness, brittleness, toughness, cannot exist *per se*. Nor  
‘can they be the substances of other qualities. It re-  
‘mains, therefore, that there must be some substance, as  
‘bread, or something by which they are made to be sub-  
‘stances. For since this sacrament is always the same,  
‘while these qualities so change, the philosopher must  
‘see that there is of necessity a substance of some kind  
‘existing as the seat of these qualities, which substance  
‘undergoes those respective changes. In the sacrament  
‘of the cross the same applies to the sense of taste ; since  
‘it may happen that the wine, though retaining at first  
‘its taste and sweetness, might, by remaining in the  
‘vessel a day, lose its taste, and become sour. Now,  
‘according to the verdict of sense and reason, we must  
‘suppose a substance of some sort whose qualities are  
‘thus changed. For we cannot predicate qualities of  
‘this sort concerning mere length, breadth, or thickness.  
‘But I have argued at length on this point elsewhere,  
‘and have opposed the testimony of Augustine in many  
‘places to this error. I proceed therefore to point out  
‘the great perplexity consequent on the delusion to  
‘which our internal faculties must be subject. For let

‘ the knowledge obtained by our external senses deceive  
‘ us, and the internal senses will of necessity fall under  
‘ the same delusion. No heretic of this sort will affirm,  
‘ in the terms of the schools, that he is acquainted with  
‘ the quiddity, the differentia—the real essence of sensible  
‘ substances. On the contrary, he will admit, as all  
‘ philosophers admit, that of such sensible existences he  
‘ knows nothing. So that if bread consecrated and un-  
‘ consecrated be mixed together, the heretic cannot tell  
‘ the difference between the natural bread, and his sup-  
‘ posed quality without a substance, any more than we can  
‘ any of us distinguish in such case between the bread  
‘ which has been consecrated, and that which has not.  
‘ Mice, however, have here an innate knowledge of the  
‘ fact. *They* know that the substance of the bread is  
‘ retained as at the first. But these unbelievers have not  
‘ even such knowledge. They never know what bread or  
‘ what wine has been consecrated, except as they see it  
‘ consecrated. But what, I ask, can be supposed to have  
‘ moved the Lord Jesus Christ thus to confound and  
‘ destroy all power of natural discernment in the senses  
‘ and minds of the worshippers? <sup>1</sup>

Surely a very natural question. Some of our young listeners evidently see its force. They show signs of being amused also, as they see the instincts of that most humble and necessitous of quadrupeds, the church-mouse,

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<sup>1</sup> Trialogus. B. iv. c. 4.

made to convict great churchmen of being devoid alike of sense and reason. But one listener, a man with an older head than most about him, Pseudis by name, is disposed to attempt the humorous on the other side, and is complacent enough to think that he can confound this Evangelical Doctor, as he is now called, upon his own showing. 'The follies,' says this gentlemen, 'to which you have given utterance have sent me into a long nap, but I must now awake and confute them. In the first place, I have an expository syllogism to state, from which you can have no escape. This bread you say becomes corrupt or is eaten by a mouse. This same bread, you further say, is the body of Christ. It follows, therefore, that the body of Christ does become thus corrupt, and is thus eaten,—and so you are involved in inconsistency.'

'It has been a false sleep, methinks,' says Wycliffe, 'in which you have indulged, with but too much of the sophist and the fox in it. Think of what has been said before, concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, and you will blush in the midst of your subtleties. The argument you call an expository syllogism I do not hold to be such. It is a deceptive paralogism. For if it follows in relation to the Trinity, that it is not the same essence which is the Father and the Son, much more is such distinction admissible in the case to which you have brought your obscure reasoning. So in the Incarnation, it does not follow because the same person is both human and divine, that therefore the humanity in this person is



‘ the divinity. So, in like manner, though a human species  
 ‘ may include Peter, and the same species may include  
 ‘ Paul, it does not therefore follow that Peter is Paul, but  
 ‘ simply that Peter and Paul are of the same species. And  
 ‘ so you can only prove, by means of your proposition,  
 ‘ that if this bread be eaten by a mouse, and if this bread  
 ‘ be in your sense the body of Christ, *then* the body of  
 ‘ Christ is so eaten.’<sup>1</sup> All depends, Pseudis, as you should  
 readily see, on what you mean by the phrase—the body  
 of Christ. If by speaking of the bread thus, you mean  
 to say that it has been transubstantiated into the ‘ body,  
 soul, and divinity’ of the Saviour, then, indeed, the  
 scandalous inference follows, that the church-mouse eats  
 your God ! But no such scandalous inference follows, if  
 it be, as Wycliffe maintains, that the bread remains bread,  
 that it is in a sacramental and figurative sense only that  
 it is the body of Christ, as John was Elias, and as the  
 ‘ rock in the wilderness was Christ.’

While some attempt, in this manner, to confound the  
 professor, others put their questions before him in a  
 different mood,—seeking light with an honest purpose.  
 Thus an auditor whom the reformer has introduced to us  
 under the name of Alithia, requests that something more  
 may be said ‘ from reason and scripture, to shew that there  
 ‘ is no *identification* of the bread with the body of Christ,  
 ‘ and no *impanation*.’ The professor himself by no

<sup>1</sup> Trialogus. B. iv. c. 8.

means satisfied with those writings in which an attempt is made 'to prove the existence of a quality without a substance, simply because the Church teaches that doctrine'? Wycliffe answers after this manner.

'As to identification, we must in the first place agree 'on what you mean by the term. It signifies an act of 'God, by which natures that are distinct in species or 'number, are said to become one and the same,—as though, 'for example, he should make the person of Peter to be 'one with the person of Paul. I have remembrance of 'having adduced many reasons to shew the impossibility 'of such identity. For according to this visionary theory, 'every quantative part of a permanent quantity, as of 'time, could be identified with every other, which is 'manifestly impossible. Supposing it to represent a line a 'foot in length, then, according to such reasoning, every 'part of that line, even the smallest, would be a foot in 'length, which is clearly a contradiction. The reason- 'ing thus applicable to time and space, is no less applic- 'able to everything else that can be named. For if A 'be identical with B, then both remains,—neither is 'annihilated. And if both remain, then they differ, in 'number and otherwise, as much as before, and so are 'not the same in the same sense. For it is plain from 'the mere force of language, that if both of them remain, 'the pronoun 'them' as being in the plural, points to 'them as numerically distinct. In like manner, suppos- 'ing both to be identical in the sense affirmed, then all

‘their differences would become identical. Every remaining difference is repugnant to identification in such a sense. Thus we should be required to accept of a thing of one species, as being identical with a thing of another species, which would be to accept what is a contradiction in terms.’<sup>1</sup> Thus not only is there no transubstantiation, there is no identification, the bread remains to the last *naturally* bread, and it is at the same time *sacramentally* and in *figure* the body of Christ. Both ideas are truthful, because each has its object, which is and must be distinct. As to the doctrine of ‘impanation,’ says the professor, ‘I oppose that by saying that in such case, the body of Christ, and so Christ made glorious in the body, would undergo all the transmutations which bread can undergo. In such case, a mouse might eat the body of Christ, and that very body would putrefy, and change into worms. Wherefore it is clear that the expression ‘this is my body’—with others like it,—as when Christ is spoken of as a lamb, a kid, a serpent,—should be understood as predicated *figuratively*.’<sup>2</sup>

We marvel, as we listen to this language, bearing in mind that it is uttered in one of the schools of Oxford in the fourteenth century. We feel assured that the man who directs the edge of his logic and rhetoric thus resolutely against this favourite dogma, must be a man contemplating wide change in the opinions and affairs of

<sup>1</sup> Trialogus. B. iv. c. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



the church. If you require to know what it is he expects to gain by proceeding thus, he will tell you that his force is directed against this dogma, not simply for its own sake, but because it is, in his sight, the great key-stone to a whole fabric of imposture,—the climax in the assumptions of priestly insolence, casting its last endurable insult, not only upon the mind, but upon the very senses of its victims. It is, he says, ‘as if the Devil had been scheming to this effect, saying—If I can, by my vicar Antichrist, so far seduce the believers in the church, as to bring them to deny that this sacrament is bread, and to believe in it as a contemptible quality without a substance, *I may after that, and in the same manner, lead them to believe whatever I may wish*, inasmuch as the opposite of such a doctrine is plainly taught, both by the language of scripture, and by the very senses of mankind. Doubtless, after a while, these simple-hearted believers may be brought to say, that however a prelate may live, be he effeminate, a homicide, a simonist, or stained with any other vice, this must never be believed concerning him, by a people who would be accounted duly obedient. But, by the grace of Christ, I will keep clear of the heresy which teaches *that if the Pope and Cardinals assert a certain thing to be the sense of scripture, therefore so it is, —for that were to set them up above the Apostles.*’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Trialogus. B. iv. c. 6—9.

Such then were the discoursings of this subject, with which the ears of the men of Oxford who frequented the schools of Wycliffe in 1379 and 1380 were familiar. Such of his auditors as were scandalized by his free thought and free utterance, no doubt, went abroad to denounce such licence, and to say much about the mischiefs to church and state that must follow from such contempt of authorities. Such, on the other hand, as crowded about the professor in eager search after truth, and with their questions of honest difficulty to propose, were ready in all circles to defend his teaching, and to pronounce his praise. Certainly, if affairs are to take their present course,—if discussion in Oxford is to be thus free, it is not too much to say that the era of momentous changes has come. Not content with the announcement of such opinions on the Eucharist, both from his chair as professor, and from the pulpit,—in the spring of 1381 Wycliffe issued a paper in which he challenged the members of the university to a public discussion on this subject. This paper consists of twelve propositions, nearly all of which are included in the passages we have given from the substance of his lectures as preserved in his *Trialogus*. In these propositions, he thus publicly declares:—‘ That the bread we see consecrated upon the altar, is not Christ, nor any part of him, but simply an effectual sign of him:—that formerly the faith of the Roman church was, as in the confession of Berengarius, that the bread and wine in

‘ the eucharist do remain after consecration :—and that ‘ the doctrine of transubstantiation, identification, or ‘ impanation, have no foundation in scripture.’ In the eighth proposition there is some obscurity of expression, the bread and wine being spoken of as in some sense changed, not however in any such sense as to preclude their remaining as bread and wine after consecration, and their being the body and blood of Christ in figure only.

But the discussion thus challenged did not take place. The authorities of the University had become alarmed. It was deemed expedient by the Chancellor, William de Berton, that measures should be taken to check the diffusion of such doctrines. The Chancellor assembled twelve doctors, to deliberate as to what should be done : and we see something of the preponderating influence of the Religious Orders in the affairs of the University at this juncture, in the fact, that of the twelve divines so convened, eight were from among those orders. With the unanimous consent of these learned persons, a decree was passed which declared the doctrine of Wycliffe on the sacrament of the altar to be erroneous, and repugnant to the determinations of the church. These determinations of the church are said to be, ‘ That by the ‘ sacramental words, duly pronounced on the part of the ‘ priest, the bread and the wine upon the altar are tran-

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix I.



‘substantiated, that is, substantially converted into the  
‘very body and blood of Christ; so that after consecra-  
‘tion, there do not remain in that venerable sacrament  
‘the material bread and wine which were there before,  
‘according to their own substances or natures, but only the  
‘species of the same, under which species the very body  
‘of Christ and his blood are really contained, not merely  
‘figuratively or tropically, but essentially, substantially,  
‘and corporeally—so that Christ is there verily in his  
‘own proper bodily presence.’ Nor was it enough that  
these authorities should give this elaborate enunciation  
to the doctrine of the church on this point. It is further  
declared, that if any person, of whatever degree, state,  
or condition, shall in future publicly teach, either in  
the schools or out of them, ‘that in the sacrament of  
‘the altar, the substance of material bread and wine do  
‘remain the same after consecration; or that in that  
‘venerable sacrament, the body and blood of Christ are  
‘not *essentially* or *substantially*, nor even *bodily*, but  
‘*figuratively* or *tropically*, so that Christ is not there  
‘truly and verily in his own *proper bodily person*,’ every  
person so offending shall be suspended from all scholastic  
exercises, shall be subjected to the greater excommuni-  
cation, and *imprisoned*—the same penalties being in-  
curred by those who *hear* such teachers, as by those who  
so *teach*.

This decree was no sooner passed than published. Wycliffe, we are told, was in his chair, discoursing to his

pupils on this very subject, when the University officers entered his school, to give formal proclamation to this order. If we may credit the report of an enemy, the Reformer betrayed some confusion as he listened to this formal and decisive condemnation of his doctrine. But if there was confusion at all, it is admitted that it was slight, and for a moment only ; for no sooner had the reading ended, than the Reformer, addressing himself to the Chancellor, and to his coadjutors in this proceeding, complained of the attempt thus made to suppress by authority, opinions which they knew that no one of them, nor all of them together, could oppose with any show of reason. At once Wycliffe apprized them of the course he meant to take in this new posture of affairs. He should appeal to Cesar. His doctrine, often promulgated, concerning the province of the civil power, warranted his so doing. To that power it pertained to protect the person, and the personal rights, of every faithful subject, and to that he would now look for protection against the personal wrongs with which he was menaced.<sup>1</sup>

We are left to imagine the scene which followed, as the Chancellor, the doctors, and the officers retired, leaving the professor alone with his scholars. We have words from him which we can readily believe to have been in substance the words uttered by him in this grave crisis of his history, 'I should be worse than an infidel,' says

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<sup>1</sup> Sudbury Register, in Wilkins' Concil. Brit. iii. 170, 171. Appendix J.

our confessor, 'were I not to defend unto the death, the  
'law of Christ: and certain I am, that it is not in the  
'power of the heretics and disciples of Antichrist, to  
'impugn this evangelical doctrine. On the contrary, I  
'trust, through our Lord's mercy, to be superabundantly  
'rewarded, after this short and miserable life, for this  
'lawful contention which I wage. I know from the  
'Gospel, that Antichrist, with all his devices, can only  
'kill the body, but Christ, in whose cause I contend,  
'can cast both soul and body into hell-fire. Sure I am,  
'that he will not suffer his servants to want what is  
'needful for them, since he freely exposed himself to a  
'dreadful death for them, and has ordained that all his  
'most beloved disciples should pass through severe suf-  
'fering with a view to their good.'<sup>1</sup> The ties between  
teachers and taught in the middle ages, were commonly  
generous and affectionate, in a degree not common among  
ourselves. In those times, the dependance of students  
on the services of the oral instructor was great; their  
dependance on books was from necessity comparatively  
small. With us that state of things has been reversed.  
We are quite safe, therefore, in supposing, that the feel-  
ing between Wycliffe and the scholars who crowded his  
school, was of a very earnest sort. Beyond doubt, it is  
to their joint zeal that we must attribute the jealousy  
and alarm which had brought on this persecution—for

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<sup>1</sup> *Dialogus*. B. iv. c. 5.



the language of the decree is, that there is to be no more such teaching, and no more such *hearing*—nothing of the sort in the schools, nothing of the sort elsewhere. Wycliffe, we may be sure, has his counsels to give them in such a moment ; and they, we may be sure, have their hot outbursts of youthful indignation. For the present, however, their policy lies on the side of submission.

Of course, the authority of the Chancellor was restricted to the University. The Reformer was still free to give publicity to his opinions as an author, and as Rector of Lutterworth. These proceedings against him in Oxford belong, as we have seen, to the spring of 1381 ; the next parliament, though summoned in the following July, did not assemble until the autumn. During this interval, Wycliffe issued his tractate intitled the ‘Wyckett,’ which treats specially of his doctrine concerning the Eucharist. Of this publication we need not speak largely, inasmuch as it consists of an exposition of that subject, distinguishable from what had been set forth by the Reformer in respect to it in his lectures at Oxford, merely as being less technical, and more adapted to popular apprehension. Wycliffe complains in the introduction to this treatise, of the measure that had been recently dealt out to him by certain ‘clerks of the law,’ whom he further describes as of the order that ‘have ever been against God the Lord, both in the old law, and in the new ; slaying the prophets who spoke to them the words of God. Yea, they spared not the Son of God, when the temporal

‘judge would have delivered him. And so forth of the ‘Apostles and martyrs, who have spoken truly of the ‘word of God.’ It is this temper that has prompted them to enact ‘the law which they have made on the sacred ‘host ;’ and even to denounce it as ‘heresy to speak of the ‘Holy Scriptures in English.’ Concerning the Eucharist, he demands of these men, ‘may the thing made turn again ‘and make him who made it ? Thou, then, that art an ‘earthly man, by what reason mayest thou say that thou ‘makest thy Maker ?’ Of men who would thus exalt themselves above their Maker, ‘Paul speaks when writing ‘of the man of sin, that advanceth himself as he were ‘God. Were this doctrine true, it would then follow, ‘that the thing which is not God to-day, shall be God ‘to-morrow—yea, that the thing which is without spirit ‘of life, but groweth in the field by nature, shall another ‘time be God—and still we ought to believe that God is ‘without beginning or ending !’ The work closes with the following paragraph :—‘Therefore, let every man ‘wisely, with much prayer and great study, and also ‘with charity, read the words of God in the Holy Scriptures. But many are like the mother of Zebedee’s ‘children, to whom Christ said, ‘Thou wottest not what ‘thou askest.’ You know not what you ask or what ‘you do. For if ye did, ye would not blaspheme God ‘as you do, setting up an alien god instead of the living ‘God. Christ saith, ‘I am a very (true) vine.’ Wherefore do ye not worship the vine for God, as ye do the

‘ bread? Wherein was Christ a very (true) vine? Or, wherein was the bread Christ’s body? It was in *figurative* speech, which is hidden to the understanding of sinners. And thus, as Christ became not a material, nor an earthly *vine*, nor a material vine the body of Christ, so neither is material bread *changed* for its *substance* to the flesh and blood of Christ. Have you not read that when Christ came into the temple, they asked of him what token he would give, that they might believe him, and he answered, ‘ Cast down this temple, and in three days I will raise it again ; ’ which words were fulfilled in his rising from the dead. But when he said, ‘ Undo this temple,’ in that he so meant they were deceived, for they understood it fleshly, and thought that he had spoken of the temple at Jerusalem, because he stood in it. And therefore, at his passion they accused him falsely, for he spake of the temple of his blessed body, which rose again on the third day. And just so Christ spake of his holy body, when he said, ‘ This is my body which shall be given for you ; ’ which was given to death, and into rising again, to bliss for all that shall be saved by him. But just as they accused him falsely about the temple at Jerusalem, so, now-a-days, they accuse falsely against Christ, and say that he spake of the bread which he brake among the Apostles. For in that Christ said this *figuratively*, they are deceived, taking it fleshly (literally,) turning it to the material bread, as the Jews did in the matter of the



‘ temple. And on this foul misunderstanding, they  
‘ make ‘ the abomination of discomfort,’ which is spoken  
‘ of by the prophet Daniel, as standing in the holy place  
‘ —he that readeth, let him understand. Now, therefore,  
‘ pray we heartily to God that this evil time may be  
‘ made short, for the sake of the chosen men, as he hath  
‘ promised in his Holy Gospel, and that the large and  
‘ broad way that leadeth to perdition may be stopped,  
‘ and that the straight and narrow way which leadeth to  
‘ bliss may be made open by the Holy Scriptures, that we  
‘ may know what is the will of God, to serve him with  
‘ truth and holiness, in the dread of God, that we may  
‘ find by him a way of bliss everlasting. So be it.’ The  
authorities which prohibited the utterance of such truth  
in Oxford, could not prevent this wider utterance of it  
by authorship; and in such terms did Wycliffe appeal  
from the judgment of the learned few in the University,  
to the common sense of the people everywhere.

The summer in which Wycliffe published his *Wyckett* is memorable as the time of the insurrection under Wat Tyler—properly Walter the Tiler, the word *tiler* being the name given in those times to the bricklayer. The causes of that outbreak lie deep in the conditions of society in that age, and should be glanced at in their bearing on the purpose of our narrative. Soon after the accession of Richard to the throne, it was demanded by the Commons, and as the condition of a grant to the government, that the Council of Twelve which had been

appointed by his first parliament should be removed, the king being now of 'good discretion,' and capable of dispensing with their services. Commissioners were at the same time appointed to investigate the expenses of the royal household. After a few months, another parliament was convened, in which it was declared that the king was 'enormously in debt;' and the Commons, in accepting the offer of the Crown to examine the public accounts—an offer which introduced a wholesome novelty into our parliamentary history—found the exchequer in arrears to the amount of £160,000. This state of things was pronounced 'most outrageous and insupportable.' The debate which ensued ended in the adoption of a poll-tax—a mode of contribution on the person, and on each according to his condition. Even this levy—probably from the ignorance of statistics common to the period—failed to meet even a moiety of the expense which had been recently incurred by an expedition into Brittany. The tax, accordingly, was renewed, on a much heavier scale, but whether from fault in the collectors or in the government, the returns now made fell below, in place of greatly exceeding, the former amount. The measure now resorted to was a desperate one, and was the main cause of the insurrection which followed.<sup>1</sup>

Four men proffered their services to ascertain the correctness of the payments made for Kent, Norfolk, and

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. III. 56, 57, 71—90.

their neighbourhood. The offer was accepted. These men were stimulated in their proceedings by the prospect of a large reward, and by the confidence that their services to the exchequer would be allowed by the government to cover almost any multitude of sins. By the last act of parliament in relation to this tax, it fell on each person from the age of fifteen, and we may imagine the many lesser insults that were offered to the irritated feeling of the people by these collectors, when we say that it was not uncommon when disputes arose as to the real age of parties, for them to insist on a settlement of such questions by proceedings which outraged every feeling of modesty. Many submitted to the imposition as their only means of escape from such insolence. But our ancestors of the fourteenth century were not a people to be long quiescent under such treatment.

The men of Kent were the first to confer upon the duty of resistance. But no man appeared in whom they could confide as a leader. A baker of Fobbing in Essex, more courageous, or less sensible to danger than his neighbours, was the first to show signs of open revolt. The populace applauded his patriotism, and the flame once ignited, spread with rapidity through that county, and through many of the towns and villages of Kent.<sup>1</sup> Belknappe, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, was dispatched to restore tranquillity among the Essex men, by

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<sup>1</sup> Knighton. *De Eventibus*, 2632, 2633.



inflicting signal punishment on the leading insurgents. But as the Grand Jury began to find indictments, the multitude rushed into their apartment, cut off their heads, and compelled the judge to swear that he would desist from all such proceedings. Two attempts of the same description were made in Kent, but the result in both instances was to augment, rather than to subdue the disaffection. It was in the month of May that the men of Essex assembled, to the amount of five thousand, armed with every kind of weapon. To these, additions were daily made, and at the head of this growing multitude was an obscure individual known in the records of the time under the feigned name of Jack Straw. In Kent, accident threw a man of the same humble origin into similar prominence. One of the collectors of the obnoxious tax entered the house of a tradesman in the town of Dartford. The collector demanded payment for a young female who stood in the apartment before him ; the mother asserted that she was not of age to be liable to the tax ; the dispute grew warm, and the man proceeded to take indecent liberties with the person of the daughter. The indignation and terror of the woman were vented in loud cries, which soon brought her neighbours about her. News of the insult offered to his wife and child reached Walter the Tiler at his work, who ran through the town, with his tool in his hand, and placing himself before the ruffian, demanded as a father, and an Englishman, on what authority he had

dared so to conduct himself. The knave became abusive, and levelled a blow at Walter. The Tiler avoided the weapon of his adversary, and with a single stroke of his lathing-hammer—still in his hand—he laid the agent of a base government dead at his feet. A new scene now opened to the Tiler of Dartford. His safety thenceforth must lie in concealment, or in the sympathy of the people. To such a man it was natural that he should confide unduly to the latter means of protection. Multitudes gathered around him, expressed aloud their admiration of his conduct, and vowed to defend him. Within a few weeks Walter appeared in the vicinity of London at the head of armed men, and their followers, said to number together not less than a hundred thousand persons.

So far, the great men who were regarded as having given evil counsel to the king, whether churchmen or laymen, appear to have been the exclusive objects of resentment. To the day on which the insurgents halted at Blackheath, the oath exacted of all who joined them, was that of fidelity to Richard and the Commons; and also that no king should be acknowledged by the name of John—an exception which is supposed to have had reference to the Duke of Lancaster.<sup>1</sup> Richard sent a messenger to inquire the cause of this tumult. The answer returned was that they sought an audience of the

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<sup>1</sup> Knighton, 2633, 2634. Walsingham, 258. Rot. Parl. III. 99. Stowe, 284.

king. Some of the royal councillors advised the sovereign to grant this request, but Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was also treasurer of the realm, gave other advice, and spoke most scornfully of the persons from whom this request had proceeded. Unfortunately for the primate, both his advice and his contemptuous expressions reached the ears of the malcontents, and were not forgotten.<sup>1</sup> The magistrates of London would have closed the city gates against Walter and the host of his adherents; but the populace within shared in the discontent of the multitude without, and the insurgents were allowed to pass London-bridge, and to flow unchecked into the capital. The king, with some members of his court, and about two hundred knights, fled for safety to the Tower. The city was in the hands of the new comers, but during some days no violence was perpetrated. They paid for all their provisions, and professed themselves willing to return to their homes so soon as the traitors of the land should be secured and punished. But discipline in such circumstances is commonly of short duration. It was felt that no time was to be lost, and Richard, accordingly, agreed to confer with the leaders at Mile-End, where he granted them a kind of charter, declared all those assembled free, and abolished servitude and villanage.

But while the main body of the disaffected were

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<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, 259.



engaged in this conference, a rabble which lingered near the Tower, forced an entrance, and overpowering the knights, they laid hands on Sudbury, archbishop and lord treasurer ; on Legg, the commissioner of the poll-tax, and some others, and having denounced them as traitors, cut off their heads and bore them in triumph on lances through the streets. From that unhappy day, everything recorded of the insurgents is marked by violence and the wildest disorder. Intoxicated with apparent success, or feeling that they had sinned too far against the government ever to be forgiven, they gave themselves up during the ensuing week to pillage, drunkenness, and murder. Three times the government assented to their demands, and still the tumult was not allayed. Richard again condescended to meet them, and the place of meeting now was Smithfield. Walter was still at the head of the multitude, and by this time had probably yielded in some degree to the growing spirit of insubordination. By the attendants of Richard the conduct of the insurgents was interpreted as disrespectful towards the sovereign, and when the king hesitated to pronounce the abolition of the forest and game laws, Walter drew so nigh to the royal person as to excite suspicion of some evil design. Walworth, the Mayor of London, seized his spear, and in a moment it was planted in the neck of the rebel ; and from the indignation of another attendant he received a second wound, in the side. He rose convulsively from the ground more than

once, but in a few minutes was no more. His followers grasped their weapons to avenge his death ; but the king, in the confidence of youth, and aware probably that even now the disaffection had little or no reference to himself, flew among them and exclaimed—‘ Why, my ‘ liege men, this clamour, will you kill your king ? Heed ‘ not the death of a traitor, I will be your leader ; come, ‘ follow me to the fields, and what you ask you shall ‘ have.’ Charmed with the spirit and confidence of the young monarch, they obeyed his summons ; but while engaged in this parley, they were alarmed by the approach of an armed force under the command of Sir Robert Knowles. The panic was suddenly diffused, and the followers of Walter fled in every direction, to be no more brought together. Richard humanely forbade pursuit. But the concessions made were all rescinded, and some hundreds of the offenders perished, in the various counties, by the hands of the executioner.<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to imagine the use that would be made of these disturbances by the enemies of Wycliffe. They would be pointed at with an air of triumph, as exhibiting the fruit to be expected from such revolutionary doctrines as had been made familiar to the ear of the people by his teaching for some years past. What more natural, than that disobedience to the church, should end

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<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, 259—265. Knighton, 2634—2637. Rymer. VII. 316, 317. Rot. Parl. III. 103, 111. Wilkins, III. 153.

in this manner, in rebellion against the state ;—that contempt of the priest, should be followed by contempt of the magistrate.

There is no evidence, however, that the doctrines of Wycliffe contributed in the slightest degree to these occurrences. By this time his opinions had produced a powerful impression on the learned, on men of rank, and on the more thoughtful of the middle classes, but we have no reason to suppose that their influence extended more than very partially to that lowest class of the people of whom the insurgents of 1381 exclusively consisted. Froissart, who is very full in his description of this insurrection, is so humane as to assure us that it all came from ‘the too great comfort of the commonalty ;’ and Walsingham, who finds the source of the whole mischief in the depravity of the people, states, that according to the confession of one of their leaders, their object in their meditated destruction of the hierarchy, was to make way for the Mendicants as the only ministers of religion. The commons, in their address to the king, laid bare the true causes of what had happened, and of the outbreaks of a similar description to which nearly all the states of Europe were at that time liable. ‘Unless ‘the administration of the kingdom be speedily reformed,’ say the commons, ‘it must be wholly lost. For there ‘are such defects in the said administration, as well ‘about the king’s person and household, as in his courts ‘of justice, and by grievous oppressions in the country,



‘ through maintainers of suits, who are as it were kings  
‘ in the country, that right and law are come to nothing,  
‘ and the poor commons are from time to time pillaged  
‘ and ruined, partly by the king’s purveyors of the  
‘ household, and others who pay nothing for what they  
‘ take, partly by the subsidies and tillages raised upon  
‘ them, and besides by the oppressive behaviour of the  
‘ king’s servants, and other lords, and especially by the  
‘ aforesaid maintainers of suits, they are reduced to  
‘ greater poverty and discomfort than ever they were  
‘ before. And moreover, though great sums have been  
‘ continually granted by, and levied upon them, for the  
‘ defence of the kingdom, yet they are not the better  
‘ defended against their enemies, but every year are  
‘ plundered and wasted by sea and land, without any  
‘ relief:—*and to speak the real truth, these injuries lately*  
‘ *done to the poorer commons, more than they ever suffered*  
‘ *before, caused them to rise, and to commit the mischief*  
‘ *done in the late riot, and there is still cause to fear*  
‘ greater evils, if sufficient remedy be not timely provided  
‘ against the outrages and oppressions aforesaid.’<sup>1</sup>

In short, this pressure of taxation, and this wasteful-

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<sup>1</sup> Hallam’s Middle Ages, III. 93. Dr. Lingard, making mention of the labours of one John Ball, an itinerant priest and preacher among the insurgents, states that he was the precursor, not, as some have said, the disciple of Wycliffe; and then adds—‘ When, however, Wycliffe began to dogmatize, he adopted the doctrines of the new teacher, and ingrafted them on his own.’ The malevolence of such an insinuation is so absurd as to become amusing.

ness or incapacity of courts and governments, had been the cause, as we have intimated, of similar disturbances in most of the countries of Europe during this century. Some thirty years before the English insurrection, the disbanded mercenaries of France had filled the provinces of that kingdom with their depredations, and unawed by the terrors of the church, had compelled the pontiff himself to purchase his personal safety in Avignon at a cost of forty thousand crowns. These banditti were known by the name of the 'companies,' and were no sooner conducted by the celebrated Du Guesclin to the war against Peter of Castile, than the French peasantry took upon them to play the anarchist, and their insurgency was distinguished from that of our own country in 1381, only as being more extended, of longer continuance, and as marked by greater atrocities. Just before the risings under Jack Straw and Wat Tyler, the French peasantry had again taken arms against their rulers, joining the populace of Paris in their complaints against the government; and this course of things in France, together with the memorable rebellion of the Flemings, did much, as we are assured by Froissart, to diffuse a spirit of insubordination almost every where. Indeed nothing can be more clear than that these appearances belong to a great transition which then began to take place in the condition of European society. The feudal system was everywhere falling to pieces, some kind of representative system, or a more thorough monarchical system was

everywhere coming into its place. Change, for the better or the worse, was the great fact of the age, and irregularity and disturbance were more or less inseparable from it. Religion, indeed, contributed something to the general excitement and confusion, but it was religion in the lowest form of ignorance and fanaticism, not at all in the intellectual and thoughtful form inculcated by Wycliffe. The Reformer always felt his dependance on the civil power, as his only means of protection against the displeasure of the ruling clergy, much too sensibly, to allow of his becoming the patron of revolt against the authority of the magistrate.

We have seen that Sudbury, the archbishop of Canterbury, was beheaded in the Tower in June 1381. In the October following, Courtney, bishop of London, was advanced to the primacy. But it was not until a few days before the meeting of the new parliament, early in May of the next year, that the new archbishop obtained the pall from Rome, and regarded his investment with office as complete. So papistical were the sympathies of this primate, that until the authority of the crown as exercised in his appointment should be confirmed, in the manner intimated, by the pope, he declined the discharge of any archiepiscopal function, and would not allow the cross to be borne before him. The zeal with which Courtney had committed himself against the opinions of Wycliffe before the convocation in St. Paul's, some years since, had lost nothing by time. On the con-



trary, his possession of greater power, only served to give greater determination to his purpose to resist and suppress all such forms of innovation to the utmost extent possible. Two days before the meeting of parliament, the primate convened a synod to deliberate concerning the measures to be taken with regard to certain strange and dangerous opinions, said to be widely diffused, 'as well among the nobility, as the commons of the 'realm of England.' We scarcely need say that doctrines which had commended themselves, not only to the sturdy commoners of England, but to many among the 'nobility,' could not have been doctrines of the Wat Tyler description. But on the seventeenth of May 1382, an assembly was convened, consisting of eight prelates, of fourteen doctors of the civil and canon law, six bachelors of divinity, fifteen mendicants, and four monks,—in all nearly fifty men of learned or official status. The place of meeting was a building belonging to one of the orders of friars, in the metropolis. The policy of the archbishop appears to have been, to secure a strong condemnation of the tenets of the Reformers, and then to commence an unsparing prosecution of such as should hesitate to renounce them. It happened, however, that as the synod was about to enter on its business, the city was shaken by an earthquake. The incident so far affected the courage of some of the parties assembled, that they ventured to intimate a doubt whether the course they were about to take might not be displeasing to heaven.

But the archbishop, who presided, rallied their courage with a promptitude which bespoke him a man possessing some fitness for authority ;—what had alarmed them was a token for good, and not for evil ; the dispersion of noxious vapours which followed such convulsions, should be interpreted as fore-shadowing the purity that would be secured to the church, when, as the result of their present conflict, everything pestilential should be extruded from her communion.<sup>1</sup>

Three days were spent in what is described as ‘good deliberation.’ We should be pleased, could we give the reader some of the more racy incidents included in this three days labour. Edifying, no doubt, it would be, could we be lookers-on and listeners, and give a full report of the good and bad, the sense and nonsense perpetrated by these fifty ecclesiastical judges through that space of time. But this is denied us. We know, however, something of what took place, by means of what is before us as the result. We know, for example, that they had discussions about the Eucharist ; that they found the doctrine widely taught on that subject,—taught, no doubt, eminently by John Wycliffe in Oxford,—to be, that the substance of the bread and wine are *not* changed in the sacrament of the altar. Of course, with all the wonder and indignation befitting the occasion, such teaching is

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkins’ *Concilia*, III 157. Foxe’s *Acts and Mon.* I. 569, 566—570. Knighton 2650.

pronounced heretical. Equally clear does it become, that these new teachers have not scrupled to declare that any priest or bishop falling into deadly sin, does thereby forfeit his power as priest or bishop, all his official acts, while in such a state, being invalid, and without effect. It is seen at once, that the effect of such a tenet on the priestly pretensions of the age would be most disastrous. Such loss of official status, would be the loss at once of their special power, and of the gains naturally allied with it. Most seemly therefore was it, that this also should be condemned as heresy. It is further shown, that there are men who presume to teach that confession to a priest, in the manner required by the church, is not a doctrine of the scripture, nor necessary to the salvation of the penitent. One glance suffices to discern whither this tends. The necessity for confession gone, absolution is gone, priestly power itself is gone. Such notion is carried by acclamation as heresy—one of the foulest of heresies. Some there were who declared that there were not wanting those who pronounced the endowment of the Christian priesthood to be contrary to the divine law; and others who insisted, that depraved men who had risen to the pontificate, were men whose authority might have emanated from the civil power, but could not have been derived from the Gospel. These opinions, also, were branded as heresy: the only regret probably being, that the culprits publishing such opinions could not be consigned, there and then, to the doom which the church



had adjudged as the just punishment of such horrible delinquency.

In the propositions judged as *erroneous* we find the following ;—That a prelate excommunicating any man, without knowing him to have been excommunicated by God, is thereby himself excommunicated, and himself convicted of heresy ;—that to prohibit appeals in civil cases, from the courts of the clergy to the court of the king, is manifest treason ;—that all priests and deacons have full right to preach the Gospel, without waiting for any licence from popes or prelates ;—that to shrink from the use of this liberty, because of the censure of the clergy, is to be a traitor to God ;—that temporal lords may deprive an unworthy priesthood of their worldly possessions ;—that tithes are merely alms, to be rendered to the clergy only as they are devout men, and according to the discretion of the contributors ;—and finally, that the institution of the religious orders had been an error and a sin, tending in many ways to evil.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the opinions thus branded as heresy and error, were frankly avowed by Wycliffe and others. Some of them, however, are disfigured by the prejudices of the synod, and would not have been acknowledged by those to whom they were imputed in the bald form in which they are here presented. The high authority by which sentence had been thus passed upon the whole of them, is

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkins' Concilia, III. 157, *et seq.* Foxe I. 568, 569. Appendix K.

often appealed to subsequently, in vindication of the measures adopted to suppress them. A letter was addressed to the bishop of London, in which Courtney, as Metropolitan of all England and Legate of the Apostolic See, laments that, in contempt of the canons which had wisely restricted the office of preaching to such as had obtained licence from the holy see, or from a bishop, many were found in divers places preaching doctrines subversive of the whole church, 'infecting many well-meaning Christians, and causing them to wander grievously from the catholic communion, beyond which there is no salvation.' To put an end to these disorders, the injunction is, that the prelates do all exercise special care not to admit any suspected persons to the liberty of preaching—that no man should listen to those holding the above pernicious tenets, nor lean towards them, either publicly or privately, but rather shun them, as serpents that diffuse pestilence and poison, on pain of the greater excommunication.<sup>1</sup>

That this crusade against heresy might take with it the greater publicity, a special religious procession was arranged to pass through the streets of London at the approaching Whitsuntide. When the appointed day came, the attention of the populace was attracted by numbers of the clergy and laity, moving barefooted towards St. Paul's. There a Carmelite friar ascended the pulpit, and admonished the multitude of their duty towards the church and

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<sup>1</sup> Foxe I. 569—571.

her enemies, at a crisis so foreboding. Letters similar to that addressed to the bishop of London, and which no doubt called forth this edifying spectacle, were addressed to all bishops ;—to the bishop of Lincoln, Wycliffe's diocesan, among the rest. By that prelate, official communications were made to the abbots, the priors, the rectors, the vicars, and even to the parochial chaplains, throughout the deanery of Goodlaxton, to which the church of Lutterworth pertained.<sup>1</sup> We think we see the Reformer in that old rectory-house which is now no more, when this monition from his diocesan reaches him ; and we think we can conjecture without much danger of mistake as to the musing over it which takes place, and as to the kind of discourse which proceeded from that old pulpit still existing in Lutterworth church, on the following Sunday.

The first use made of the decision agreed upon at the synod in the Grey Friars, was to summon Nicholas Hereford and Philip Reppington, doctors of divinity, and John Ashton, master of arts, to make their appearance before the same parties, as assembled again in the same place on the twentieth of June. Hereford and Reppington were distinguished men in Oxford ;—Ashton was a popular preacher, well known in many parts of England.<sup>2</sup> The intention in this proceeding, was to

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<sup>1</sup> Knighton, 2652.

<sup>2</sup> Master John Ashton appears to have been known over half the kingdom as an itinerant preacher. Even from his enemies we learn,



exact from these suspected persons an explicit disapproval of the series of articles which the synod had condemned as being either heretical or erroneous ; or in case of failure in this respect, to subject them to such severities of discipline, as might suffice to deter others from the thought of following such examples. We regard the popular notion which says, that opinion is not to be suppressed by force, and that persecution must always be in the end impolitic, as not without its measure of wholesome influence. But these maxims are by no means so largely true as is commonly supposed. Persecution has often been successful. It cannot prevent the destined

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that he was a man of scholarship, and of popular talent, capable of awakening a deep interest in the people whenever he addressed them. His discourses, for the most part, were such as Wycliffe himself might have delivered. But he was evidently a man of much independent thought and action, and often broached novelties that were properly his own. Knighton, his contemporary, describes him as appearing in coarse attire, walking from county to county, with his staff in his hand, in great affectation of simplicity. But the same authority bears testimony to the zeal with which he sought access to pulpits, to families, and to all gatherings of the people, to propagate his doctrines. This writer has preserved the outlines of two discourses delivered by this pedestrian instructor, one at Leicester, the other at Gloucester. In these sermons we find the doctrine of Wycliffe concerning the supremacy of the crown over all church matters and churchmen ; the delusion and abuse of church censures ; the evil influences of rich ecclesiastical endowments ; the unscriptural origin of heirarchial distinctions among the clergy ; the errors and absurdities involved in the doctrine of transubstantiation ; and a special exposure of the malevolent passions which had always originated and characterized the crusades—those bitter fruits of the dispensing power assumed by a corrupt priesthood. Knighton *De Eventibus*, 2660.

progress of the race, but it has done much to extrude right thinking from all effective place among particular peoples. It has been thus in Italy, Portugal, Spain, and elsewhere, even in recent times, and it will be thus again in like circumstances. The countries named have all had their protestants, but where is now their protestantism? Many may think justly, and be sincere in their convictions, who are not prepared to become martyrs in the cause of their opinions. Opinions are found to be socially strong, only as they marshal intelligence and numbers, and so become, in their turn, a physical force opposed to such force.

In the proceedings designed to suppress the doctrine of Wycliffe, which date especially from this time, there is much to require that such facts as we have adverted to should be borne in mind. As the storm darkened, some of the most intelligent and earnest of the disciples of the Reformer, felt that they were in reality few and feeble, in comparison with the odds arrayed against them, and from this cause, appear at times to have looked upon resistance as hopeless, and to have bowed in a measure to the storm. But even among this class of sufferers, there were those who endured far more than certain parties,—who sometimes scoff at them for not enduring more still,—would ever be found submitting to, for any interest not purely selfish. The men are few, who are of such a make as to be capable of martyrdom; and, unhappily, the men are not few, who would seem to be



incapable of becoming confessors, or sufferers for truth, as truth, even in the smallest degree.

In the examinations to which Hereford and Reppington were subjected, they gave answers concerning the Eucharist, and other doctrines, which ceded so much, that their judges might, with some reason, have been expected to profess themselves satisfied. But when the utmost concession the accused were prepared to make had been made, still there was a demand for something more. After much scrutiny, the answers given were formally pronounced, by all present, as '*insufficient, heretical, insincere, subtle, erroneous, and perverse.*' Eight days were left to the delinquents, for a due consideration of the course they had taken in refusing to answer further; and they were admonished, that should they not be prepared by that time to reply to the questions put to them, without any use of logical, technical, or doubtful terms, they would be adjudged as convicted of all the errors not so repudiated.

The examination of Ashton was conducted separately, and his course of proceeding was still less acceptable to the synod. When required to answer certain questions in relation to the Eucharist, he would only reply, that his faith on that subject was the faith of the church—meaning, probably, the faith of the church in her purer times. To some of the questions he answered, that they were beyond his understanding, to others he spoke obscurely. It was soon perceived that his observations tended to



convey impressions in favour of his doctrine to the mind of the people who were listening, and he was enjoined to deliver himself in Latin. But in place of conforming to this instruction, he spoke the more vehemently in the mother-tongue, and, as the record states, with discourtesy toward the primate and his coadjutors. In the end, accordingly, his answers were declared to be '*insufficient, contemptuous, and heretical.*'

These signs of resistance may have suggested to the archbishop the importance of endeavouring to bring more of the civil power into his course of proceeding. It was but too manifest that the time had come in which little was to be expected from the censures of the church, except as sustained by the authority and penalties of the state. Richard was now sixteen years of age. The commons, as we have seen, were discontented, full of complaints, and the government found it exceedingly difficult to obtain the necessary supplies from that quarter. Courtney, beside his authority as primate, possessed great influence through his family, the Courtneys of Devonshire ; and at a juncture when the commons were found to be a little manageable, the question appears to have forced itself on the ministers of the crown—whether it did not behove them to conciliate the clergy, and to avail themselves of assistance from that source. The clergy were not slow in seizing the occasion, hoping thereby to recover the ascendancy which for some years past had been departing from them. The late insurrection,

which had been suppressed without removing from the people a single grievance of which they had complained, seemed to have occurred for scarcely any other purpose than to supply plausible excuses for resisting, and putting down, all free thought, in matters of church or state.

It is at this moment, accordingly, that the clergy unite in presenting to the king and the court, a series of complaints against the principles and proceedings of the disciples of Wycliffe, to whom they now give the name of Lollards—a name which had long been borne by some religious sects upon the continent, to whom, as the fashion is in such cases, almost everything flagitious or contemptible had been attributed. The parties in England now so designated, are described as teaching—that since the time of Silvester, there has not been any true pope, and that the existing pope Urban VI. is the last to whom that name should be given: that the power of granting indulgences, and of binding and loosing, as claimed by ecclesiastics, is without authority, and that all who confide in it are deceived; that confession to a priest is a worthless observance; that the bishop of Rome has no legislative power in the church; that the invocation of saints is contrary to Holy Scripture; that the worship of images or pictures is idolatry, and that the miracles attributed to them are frauds; that the clergy are bound to reside on their benefices, and not to farm them out to others; and finally, that the pomp of the higher orders of the clergy should be done away,

so that their doctrine concerning the vanity of the world might be inculcated by example.

It will be seen, that as far as ecclesiastical usage is concerned, these reformers of the fourteenth century left little to be attempted, for the first time, by any of the generations that have come after them. Among the doctrines above enumerated, there are one or two which, as we think, were never taught by Wycliffe; but, as a whole, they no doubt give the substance of the teaching, common to that class of preachers to the people, frequently mentioned by the Reformer in the later years of his life, under the title of 'poor priests!' This complaint of the clergy against these teachers, now obtained the sanction of the king and of the lords to whom it was presented; and though, as thus approved, it was no act of parliament, and could take with it no higher authority than that of a royal proclamation, it was hoped that it might be made to carry the force of law. It is an instructive document, in several respects, and we give it therefore entire. 'Forasmuch as it is openly known that there are  
' divers evil persons within the realm, going from country  
' to country, and from town to town, in certain habits,  
' under dissimulation of great lowliness, and without the  
' licence of the ordinaries of the places, or other sufficient  
' authority, preaching *daily*, not only in *churches* and  
' *churchyards*, but also in *markets*, *fairs*, and *other open*  
' *places*, where a great congregation of people is, divers  
' sermons, containing heresies, and notorious errors, to



‘ the great blemishing of the Christian faith, and destruction of all the laws and estate of holy-church, to the great peril of the souls of the people, and of all the realm of England (as is more plainly found and sufficiently proved before the reverend father in God, the archbishop of Canterbury, and the bishops and other prelates, masters of divinity and doctors of canon and of civil law, and a great part of the clergy of this realm, especially assembled for this cause), which persons do also preach divers matters of slander, to engender discords and disunion between divers estates of the said realm, as well spiritual as temporal, in exciting of the people, to the great peril of all the realm ; which preachers being cited or summoned before the ordinaries of the places, there to answer to that whereof they be impeached, *they will not obey to their summons and commandments, nor care for their monitions, nor for the censures of holy church, but expressly despise them ;* and, moreover, by their *subtle and ingenious words do draw the people to hear their sermons,* and do maintain them in their error by strong hand, and by great routs :—it is therefore ordained and assented in this present parliament, that the king’s commission be made and directed to the sheriffs, and other ministers of our sovereign lord the king, or other sufficient persons, learned, and according to the certifications of the prelates thereof, to be made in the chancery from time to time, to *arrest* all such preachers, and also their *fautors, maintainers, and abettors,* and to

*'hold them in arrest and strong prison, till they shall purify themselves according to the law and reason of holy church. And the king willeth and commandeth, that the chancellor make such commissions at all times, that he, by the prelates, or any of them, shall be certified, and thereof required, as is aforesaid.'*<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that this document had been drawn up with the expectation that it might become an act of parliament. But on further thought, it was not deemed expedient to submit it to the two houses ; and what the commons had to say on the subsequent attempt to give it the force of law without their consent, will appear presently. In the meanwhile, we may observe, there is, even in this dry law-paper, something of the pictorial. These 'poor priests'—these sturdy, free-spoken, and popular methodists of the fourteenth century, are here travelling before us, from country to country, from town to town, and village to village, bare-footed, staff in hand, the visible personation of the toilsome, the generous, the noble-hearted. In churches or churchyards, in markets or fairs, before gentle or simple, pious or profligate—wherever men or women are gathered together, or may be gathered, there the itinerant instructor of this school finds his preaching-place, and discourses boldly on the difference between the religion of the Bible, with its appeals to every man's reason and consciousness, and the supersti-

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Hist. I. 177. Fox. I. 575, 576.

tions of the priests, which have nothing to sustain them save that hollow mockery called the authority of the church. Prelates and abbots, mendicants and monks, rectors and curates become wrathful—but the people are not wrathful. Almost to a man they attest that the stranger is in the right, and that harm shall not be done to him: Knighton mentions a number of persons of some figure who openly favoured the new preachers, such as Sir Thomas Latimer, Sir John Trussell, Sir Lodowich Clifford, Sir John Peche, Sir Richard Story, and Sir John Hilton. It was the manner of these distinguished persons, as our historian informs us, when a preacher of the Wycliffe order came into their neighbourhood, to give notice to all the neighbourhood of time and place, and to draw a vast audience together. Even beyond this did they proceed, for you might see them standing round the pulpit of the preacher, armed, and prepared to defend him from assault with their good swords if there should be need. Knighton, who complains of this mode of proceeding as being rather Mohammedan than Christian in its spirit, is nevertheless obliged to give these Lollard or Puritan Knights the credit of being governed by a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge.\*

The local official, not daring to go further, serves his writ upon the disorderly stranger, requiring him to appear before his ordinary—but the stranger is speedily else-

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<sup>1</sup> De Eventibus, 2660, 2661.



where, and at his wonted labour. Proud churchmen thunder their anathema against him ; to him it is an empty sound. The soul under that coarse garb, and which plays from beneath that weatherworn countenance, is an emancipated soul—not so much the image of the age in which we find it, as the prophecy of an age to come—to come only, after a long, a dark, and a troubled interval shall have passed away !

But primate Courtney knew full well, that neither the provinces nor the metropolis had been so fertile of the kind of doctrine which he was disposed to brand as heresy and error, as the university of Oxford. Wycliffe had now withdrawn for a season from his accustomed walks in that old city, and was giving himself to many labours at Lutterworth, preaching on the Sunday, visiting his flock, revising some of the more learned of his papers, and issuing tracts and treatises in English in support of his opinions, with amazing rapidity. In the mean while, the seed sown by him in Oxford continues to vegetate. Not only have the young been powerfully affected by his teaching, but many of the most influential persons resident there are forward in protesting against the course that has been pursued towards him, and make no scruple in declaring themselves as being more or less of his opinion. Along with the above pseudo-statute, accordingly, which applied to the whole country, Courtney obtained a writ from the king, addressed specially to Oxford, which empowered and required the proper autho-

rities to make immediate and full search for all persons suspected of being approvers of the conclusions condemned by the synod at the Grey Friars, and promulgated by John Wycliffe, Nicholas Hereford, Philip Reppington, and John Ashton, and to expel all such persons from the university, except they recant their errors, in seven days. Diligent search is also to be made for all books written by the above-named persons, or their adherents, that the same may be delivered up to the archbishop; and the mayor of Oxford, and the sheriff of the county, with all officers under them, are commanded to render such assistance as may be required to give effect to this instrument.

The proceedings of the Archbishop were carefully observed in Oxford, and the excitement in anticipation of the coming storm appears to have been great. Reppington lectured as a professor of divinity in Oxford, and a little prior to his appearance before the synod in London, he had declared himself willing to undertake a public defence of the opinions of Wycliffe—excepting indeed his doctrine on the Eucharist, which the professor was disposed to leave in abeyance, until the clergy themselves should be capable of dealing with it after a more enlightened manner. Nevertheless, in the face of this fact, and of the fact that the professor had returned to Oxford from the recent meeting of the synod under ecclesiastical censure, Reppington is invited to preach a university sermon at St. Fridiswide's, on the festival of Corpus Christi. But some of the guardians of the

orthodoxy of the times, write to the archbishop, and urge, that to prevent the preacher from making a mischievous use of his liberty, upon an occasion when so large a portion of the university would be present, it would be well if the conclusions from the writings of Wycliffe, which the synod had condemned as heretical or erroneous, were published in Oxford, in due form, before that day. Courtney immediately deposes Dr. Stokes to act as his commissioner, and requires him to see that the said conclusions be published in the university on the very day on which Reppington is expected to preach. The primate further writes to the chancellor of the university, Dr. Rigge, requiring him to give his sanction to Dr. Stokes as so commissioned, by being present at his next lecture ; and also by being present in the divinity schools when the beadle should publicly read the judgment of the synod concerning the aforesaid conclusions. The chancellor on receiving this document shows great indignation. The archbishop, he insists, had no authority to proceed against heresy within the limits of the university, and that Dr. Stokes had shown himself an enemy to its just independence by the course which he had taken in becoming a party to these episcopal interferences.

The first step of the chancellor is to assemble a convocation of the heads of colleges, and of Masters of Arts, and to submit the matter to the judgment of that body. In the course of the proceedings the chancellor declared, that so far was he from being prepared to assist Dr.



Stokes in the manner required, that he should resist his pretended authority by every means within his power ; and that so resolved was he to acquit himself faithfully on this question, and to prevent the contemplated publication of the conclusions which the prelates had censured, that he should call upon the mayor, the town militia, and a hundred armed men, to act with him for the protection of the university, against this manifest attempt to suppress its rights and liberties.

These were large words—nor were they merely words. On the appointed day the chancellor made his appearance in St. Fridiswide's church, attended by the mayor, the proctors, and a very imposing array of persons, both from the university and the town. It was a Corpus Christi day to be remembered. The preacher, in place of dwelling on the doctrine of the Eucharist,—the topic generally expected on the occasion—took up the opinions of Wycliffe, in succession, and would seem to have said many strong and startling things in support of them. Concerning the hierarchy, and the clergy generally, he spoke in terms little favourable—as may be inferred from the fact of his maintaining, that the man who should give prelate or pope precedence of the civil magistrate, either in affairs of state, or in the prayers of the church, sinned therein against the authority of scripture, and against a principle necessary to all good government.

Of the manner in which this doctrine was received by

a large portion of the congregation in St. Fridiswide's on that day, we may judge from what we see, when the chancellor, attended by his hundred men, privately armed, presents himself to the preacher, for the purpose of expressing their sense of obligation to him for his services. Dr. Stokes, in the meantime, is careful to avoid appearance in public, and writes to the archbishop, that in the present state of feeling in Oxford, so far was he from possessing the power necessary to execute his grace's instructions, that to himself and some others, life would not be long secure there, if new means of protection were not speedily brought to them. The primate summoned Dr. Stokes to London, that he might give a fuller account of this strange and unexpected posture of things. But the chancellor, his friend Master Brightwell, and the two proctors—William Dash and John Huntman by name—also presented themselves to the archbishop, that the version of matters furnished by Dr. Stokes, might not pass without proper explanation or correction. But the judge in this case was much more disposed to receive impressions from Dr. Stokes, than from his opponents—and in conclusion, he declared that he found the Chancellor, Brightwell, and the Proctors, to be persons manifestly tainted with the errors and heresies of John Wycliffe.

Courtney appears to have judged rightly concerning his present position. If the new opinions were not to become speedily ascendant through the length and breadth of

the land, this powerful party in favour of them in Oxford must be vanquished. But could this be regarded as possible? The primate could appeal to the king's writ, having reference specially to Oxford; and he could appeal to the late statute—for such it was in form and pretence at least—having reference to the whole kingdom, as warranting such an exercise of firmness on his part as the exigency seemed to demand. He believed that there are occasions on which force, if directed with sagacity and energy, may suppress opinion, and he did not err in the main in regarding the present occasion as one of that description.

On the next meeting of the synod, accordingly, the chancellor of Oxford was made to feel that further resistance in present circumstances would be useless—worse than useless. The primate and the king conjoined, made up too formidable an antagonism. The chancellor made a confession with which his judges professed to be satisfied. But on being required to publish the Wycliffe conclusions in Oxford, and to make diligent search for all persons suspected of holding them, that they might be obliged to recant, or be expelled the university, he declared that it would be at the hazard of his life to attempt obedience to such instructions. He did, however, give some sort of publication to the obnoxious conclusions, and in the name of the archbishop; which was followed, we are told, by such manifestations of resentment on the part of the secular stu-



dents towards the religious orders, as obliged the latter to consult their safety by concealment or flight.

We learn also, that even now, the chancellor, and many who shared in his sympathies, gave sign enough that their outward submission had left them with unaltered impressions. It was this feeling, which seemed to spurn authority when once removed from its presence, that gave so much employment to the synod—for beside assembling in May, to pass sentence on the Wycliffe doctrines, it was convened four times in the month of June, and twice in July, and after all it was obliged to delegate its work, as still in great part unfinished, to the convocation which should assemble in Oxford, the seat of the poison, in the following November.

During these proceedings Wycliffe was diligently employed in Lutterworth. But he was not inobservant of what was thus passing. In more than one of his sermons, he refers to the proceedings of the Grey-friars synod, as to passing events, and expresses his sympathy with the men who were suffering as its victims. In one of these discourses he denounces the persecuting policy of the 'great bishop of England,'—primate Courtney, and of the 'pharisees,' meaning the monks and mendicants, who were his chief coadjutors; especially as it had been evinced in their manner of procuring the king's writ against Oxford, and the pretended statute against heresy. The preacher discourses on the entombment of Christ, and from the uselessness of the seal which the

soldiers had placed on the door of the sepulchre, occasion is taken to speak of the futility of human devices when resorted to for the purpose of burying Christ's truth from the sight of men. 'Thus,' he observes, 'do our high-priests, and our religious, fear them, lest God's law, after all they have done, should be quickened. Therefore make they statutes stable as a rock, and they obtain grace of knights to confirm them, and this they will mark with a witness of lords : and all lest the truth of God's law, hid in the sepulchre, should break out to the knowing of the common people. Oh Christ, thy law is hidden thus, when wilt thou send thine angel to remove the stone, and shew thy truth unto thy flock ! Well I know that knights have taken gold in this matter, to help that thy law may be thus hid, and thine ordinances consumed. But well I know that at the day of doom it shall be manifest, and even before, when thou arisest against all thine enemies.' <sup>1</sup>

The question naturally arises—how was it that the prosecutions of this juncture, which fell with so much force upon the friends of Wycliffe, were not extended to himself ? This may be explained in part by the fact that these proceedings had respect chiefly to the state of things in Oxford, and some twelve months before they were instituted Wycliffe had retired from the university, and become resident at Lutterworth. Silenced

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<sup>1</sup> MS. Hom. Bib. Reg. British Museum.

as a professor, he ceased to be any more a resident in Oxford, and gave himself to his duties as a parish priest, and to increased labour as an author. But there was another circumstance which probably contributed much more to prevent the synod—at least for the present—from including the Reformer among its selected victims. Courtney had experienced something of the inconvenience of having John of Gaunt as an antagonist. The scene in St. Paul's was of a sort not soon to be forgotten. It is clear that up to this time, the Reformer had reason to think that he might confide, in any case of exigency, in the good offices of the Duke of Lancaster. Courtney, accordingly, appears to have been willing to accept the Reformer's comparatively peaceful retirement to his rectory as a sufficient reason for not doing more just now than place his name in the list of persons 'notoriously suspected of heresy.'

But Wycliffe spoke truly, when he proclaimed to his flock, from that old pulpit at Lutterworth—'the perilous times are come!' Nearly sixty winters had now passed over the brow of the Reformer. Sickness appears to have done something towards impairing his strength; mental labour had done more, but care, sorrow,—the kind of sorrow which consists in sympathy with the injured and the down-trodden, through which the generous do ever work out their deliverances for humanity—that had done most of all, towards restricting his course to a narrower space than it might otherwise have



filled. But while the seeds of a comparatively early death were in this manner but too surely sown, we have evidence enough that the spirit of the Reformer was in no respect broken by the antagonisms of this crisis. He had said nothing which he was not prepared to say again. Nor was he at all disposed to purchase a selfish quiet by a timid silence. His conduct at this time is sufficiently intelligible, and through it, we think we hear him say—‘You great ones of the priesthood, in synod  
‘ assembled, so busy in putting well-meaning souls to  
‘ the torture by your summonings and questionings,  
‘ think not that I have failed to be mindful of the  
‘ things ye do. Neither think ye because you have pass-  
‘ ed me by for a while, in this quiet and obscure town of  
‘ Lutterworth, leaving me without taste of your moles-  
‘ tation, that for that cause naught will be said or done  
‘ by me in behalf of God’s proscribed truth, and of the  
‘ injured men who love it. It will not be so. I see you  
‘ doing as your order hath ever been only too much  
‘ disposed to do—using your ill-gotten and false power to  
‘ put down the worthy. More than a year since, I told  
‘ your coadjutor, William de Berton, then chancellor of  
‘ Oxford, that he might have power to silence me in my  
‘ own hall, but that he had not power to prevent my  
‘ appealing to a much higher authority than his,—the  
‘ authority of the king and parliament. What was done,  
‘ and what was said on that memorable day, is still  
‘ present with me. Well I know, that it will offend you

‘deeply should I do as I then said I would do. Your powers for evil will then, no doubt, be directed against me, more than against the pious and honourable men whom you have of late been summoning, cursing, and menacing so notoriously. But it shall be done ;—done because I have said it ; done because it is a right thing to do.’

The parliament to which the document produced in these circumstances was addressed, was summoned for the fifteenth of October, and met on the nineteenth of November in 1382 : and the paper supposes the two houses to be sitting. It appears also to have been known, that in this meeting of ‘the great men of the realm, both seculars and men of holy Church,’ the several articles especially embraced in this appeal, would become matters of discussion. Concerning these articles the author affirms, that they are such as may be ‘proved by authority and reason ;’ and his object in inviting the attention of the king and the parliament to them is said to be, that ‘the Christian Religion may be increased, maintained, and made stable, since our Lord Jesus Christ, very God and very man, is head and prelate of this religion, and shed his precious heart’s blood, and water out of his side on the cross, to make this religion perfect, and stable, and clean without error.’

The articles to which allusion is thus made are four in number. The first relates to the vows taken upon them

by the religious orders, and declares them to be an invention of men, not only without authority from scripture, but in shameless contravention of that authority. The second article asserts that 'secular lords may lawfully, 'and meritoriously, in many cases, take away temporal 'goods from churchmen.' In the third section it is maintained, that even tithes, and offerings of every sort, should be withholden 'from prelates, or other priests, whoever they be' upon their being known to have fallen into 'great sins,' such as 'pride, simony, manslaughter, gluttony, drunkenness, or lechery.' In the last article, the Reformer sets forth his doctrine on the Eucharist, and prays that 'what is plainly taught by Christ 'and his apostles in the Gospels and Epistles,' on that subject 'might be also openly taught in the churches.'

We have seen, that in the synod which had been so much engaged during the last twelvemonths in instituting proceedings against parties suspected of heresy, the majority, exclusive of the eight prelates, were either friars or monks. This fact is sufficient to explain the return of the Reformer to his old controversy with that section of opponents. His aim is to show, that the men who had been allowed to act as lords and judges in the church, are men who in the particular profession made by them, have exposed themselves, if right were done, to heavy censure. Both mendicants and monks he denounces, as wedded to an institute which he describes as of merely 'private,'—that is, of a purely



human origin, and as putting disparagement on Christ, by saying, in effect, that the 'rule' given by him to his church, is one of less wisdom and sanctity, than that which has been devised for her benefit by St. Francis or St. Benedict. But too frequently, it is alleged, the insincerity of this pretence becomes manifest,—for what friar or monk hesitates to cast off his garb, and to relinquish the holiest of institutes, when he happens to come within the attraction of a mitre?

In this section of his 'complaint,' the Reformer expresses himself in the following terms with respect to the authority of scripture, and the right of every man to judge for himself concerning the meaning of scripture. 'Inasmuch as one patron, or one founder is more perfect, 'more mighty, more witty, (skilful,) and more holy, 'and in more charity, than is another patron or founder; 'in so much is the first patron's rule better and more 'perfect, than is the second patron's rule. But Jesus 'Christ, the patron of the Christian Religion as given 'to the apostles, surpasseth, without measure, in might, 'wit, and good will, or charity, the perfection of every 'patron of any private sect, and therefore his rule is 'more perfect. Also that Christ's clean religion, without patching of sinful men's errors, is most perfect of all, 'is shown thus. For otherwise Christ *might* have given 'a rule, the most perfect for this life, and *would not* '—and then he was envious, as Austin proveth in other 'matters; or else Christ *would* have ordained such a

‘rule, and *might not*, and then he was *unmighty*. But  
‘to affirm that of Christ is heresy. Or else Christ  
‘*might* and *could*—and *would not*—and then he was  
‘unwitty. And that also is heresy that no man should  
‘suffer to hear. It follows, therefore, that Christ both  
‘*might*, and *could*, and *would* ordain such a rule, the  
‘most perfect to be kept for this life: and so Christ of  
‘his endless wisdom and charity *hath* ordained such a  
‘rule. And so on each side, men be needed, upon pain  
‘of heresy and blasphemy, and of damning in hell,  
‘to believe and acknowledge that the religion of Jesus  
‘Christ given to the apostles, and kept of them in its own  
‘freedom, without patching of sinful men’s errors, is the  
‘most perfect of all. \* \* \* This rule was kept by  
‘Jesus Christ and his apostles, and their best followers,  
‘for four hundred years after his ascension, in which  
‘time holy church increased and profited most, for  
‘then almost all men disposed themselves to martyrdom,  
‘after the example of Christ; and therefore it were not  
‘only meritorious, or wholesome—but most wholesome  
‘for the church, that men live so in all things.’

Of course, it would be said, in answer to this argument, that the church, by her formal and often repeated decisions, had assigned to the religious orders the place filled by them in her system, and that it was not to be borne that individuals should presume to plead their personal judgment, in opposition to what had been so determined. The reply of Wycliffe and of his disciples

to this objection was, in substance.—‘We are not careful to explain how it has come to pass, but manifest it is, that the church *has* erred in this matter; and we claim, accordingly, to be exempt from its authority in this respect, and to be left to the guidance of reason and scripture. Surely, while it is permitted to others to choose mere men as their patrons, it might be permitted to us to choose Him as our patron who is very God and very man.’ But church authority, so dealt with in this case, was, in fact, an authority not likely to be admitted in any case. The opponents of the Reformer were fully alive to this issue, and shaped their measures accordingly.

The second of the articles contained in this paper, is opposed to the clerical dogma which denied all right of jurisdiction in the magistrate, in relation either to the persons or the property of ecclesiastics. Wycliffe, as we have seen, had protested and reasoned, long since and often, against this arrogant pretension. Certain friars, on some recent and public occasion, had broached this doctrine in its most unmitigated form; and in now returning to it, the Reformer carries the principle assumed to its legitimate results, and in so doing demonstrates, that, in such case, the only power really existing would be, the power of the clergy; the existence of civil government being of necessity an existence purely by sufferance from that higher power. Granting what is thus demanded, should ‘an Abbot and all his convent



‘ be open traitors, conspiring unto the death of the king  
‘ and queen, and of other lords, and enforce them (equip  
‘ themselves) to destroy all the realm, there may not be  
‘ taken from them a half-penny or farthing worth, since  
‘ all these be temporal goods. Also, though other clerks  
‘ send to our enemies all the rents they have in our  
‘ land, and whatever they may steal from the king’s  
‘ liege men, yet our king may not punish them to a  
‘ farthing or a farthing’s worth. Also by the ground  
‘ (argument) of friars, though monks or friars, or other  
‘ clerks, whatever they may be, should slay lord’s ten-  
‘ ants, the king’s liege men, and defile lord’s wives, yea  
‘ the queen (that God forbid) or the empress—yet the  
‘ king may not punish them to the loss of one farthing.  
‘ Also it followeth plainly, that men called men of holy  
‘ church, may dwell in this land at their liking, and do  
‘ what kind of sin or treason they like, and, nevertheless,  
‘ the king may not punish them, not in temporal goods,  
‘ nor in their body—since if he may not punish them in  
‘ the less, he may not in the more. Also, should they  
‘ make one of themselves king, no secular lord may  
‘ hinder him to conquer all the secular lordships in this  
‘ earth : and so they may slay all lords and ladies, and  
‘ their blood and affinity, with any pain in this life, or  
‘ in body, or in substance. Ye lords, see, and understand,  
‘ with what punishing they deserve to be chastised, who  
‘ thus unwarily and wrongfully have damned you for  
‘ heretics, forasmuch as ye do execution and righteous-

‘ness, according to God’s law and man’s, and especially of the king’s regalia. For the chief lordship of all temporalities in the land, both of secular men and religious, pertains to the king of his general governing: for else he were not king of England, but of a little part thereof.’

So does the Reformer assert the supremacy of the civil power over all territory and temporality, and over all persons in civil causes, within this realm of England:—adding, with much potency, that magistracy is, whatever some men may teach to the contrary, ‘God’s ordinance,’ and that Paul, ‘putting all men in subjection to kings, out-taketh never a one.’

The aim of our Reformer was threefold,—to show that the clergy may not be independent of the civil power in the manner assumed by them; to maintain that the laity are not given over into the hands of the clergy, in the manner supposed in the received theory of the church; and to protest against the undue authority of the higher clergy in relation to the lower, as consistent enough with the structure of the existing hierarchy, but contrary both to the maxims and spirit of the gospel. He would restrict all coercive power to the authority of the magistrate, and would have all men subject alike to that authority—the strong and the weak, priest and layman.

The third article, which maintains, as we have said, that a vicious clergy forfeits by its vices, all claim to clerical temporalities, is made to rest, partly on the authority of Scripture, and partly on the papal laws

themselves. On this ground the sons of Eli were degraded from the service of the temple. On this ground, also, the priesthood of Jerusalem was to be sustained, while the priests of Jeroboam were to be disowned. Among later authorities, speaking to this effect, mention is made of Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the great, St. Bernard, and Grossteste. Paul is described as requiring Timothy, though a bishop, to be content with food and rayment ; and St. Bernard is cited as saying ‘ what-soever thou takest to thee of tithes and offerings, beside ‘ simple livelihood, and straight-clothing, is not thine, it ‘ is theft, ravine, and sacrilege.’ Wherefore, says the Reformer, ‘ it followeth plainly, that not only simple ‘ priests and curates, but also sovereign curates, as bishops, ‘ should not by constraining ask their subjects for more ‘ than livelihood and clothing. Also, Christ and his ‘ apostles lived a most poor life, as is known by all the ‘ process of the Gospel, challenging nothing by exactions ‘ nor constraining, but lived simply and scarcely enough, ‘ on alms freely and voluntarily given. Wherefore they ‘ that pretend to be principal followers of Christ’s steps, ‘ should walk as Christ did, and so lead a poor life, ‘ taking of things freely given, as much as need is, for this ‘ ghostly office, and no more.

Wycliffe does not scruple to say, that ‘ curates be more ‘ accursed in withdrawing teaching of the gospel and ‘ God’s commandments, by word and example, than be ‘ parishioners in withdrawing tythes and offerings, even



‘ though curates do well their office.’ This was a bold statement, but not more bold than true ; and well adapted to act as a check on the churchmen who were constantly dooming souls to perdition for the most trivial causes, and from the meanest and most sordid motives. This section concludes thus, ‘ Ah ! Lord God, is it reason to constrain the poor people to find a worldly priest, sometimes unable both in life and knowledge, in pomps and pride, covetousness and envy, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery, in simony and heresy, with fat horse and jolly and gay saddles, and bridles ringing by the way, and himself in costly clothes and furs, and to suffer their wives and children, and their poor neighbours to perish for hunger, thirst, and cold, and other mischiefs of the world. Ah ! Lord Jesus Christ, since within a few years men paid their tythes and offerings of their own free will, to men able to conduct the worship of God to the profit and fairness of holy church fighting on earth —wherein can it be lawful and needful that a worldly priest should destroy this holy and approved custom, constraining men to leave this freedom, turning tythes and offerings unto wicked uses, or to uses not so good as before time ? ’ We can imagine Wycliffe, with his barely-covered feet, his pilgrim-staff, and time-worn garb, pacing the roadways about Oxford, or in the quiet neighbourhood of Lutterworth, and as being passed there by the gaily mounted and gaily attired ecclesiastic so graphically sketched in the preceding extract, and we can

suppose the humane heart of the apostolic man to be moved by the question—how many of the poor have been wickedly impoverished to furnish that sensuous and vain creature with his many trappings and indulgences ? Paul and Peter—we think we hear him mutter as he passes—would count it strange that such a thing as that should call himself a follower of *them*—of them in gear like *that*, and in such sumptuous living in much beside, as that gay and lusty presence gives token of to all beholders. The pomp of magistracy Wycliffe could understand, but such appearances in the ministers of religion, never came within his notions of the seemly.

The fourth article in this paper, touches, as we have intimated, on the doctrine of the Reformer concerning the Eucharist ; but it adds nothing to the information on that subject which we have presented elsewhere.

In these days of printing, postage, and swift communication, we are at a loss to conceive how a paper of this description could be made to find its way to the members of the English parliament, so as to serve its intended purpose. We know, however, that in those times, as truly, if not as largely, as in our own, authors did find readers. The ambition of authorship was as fervent then as now. The means of multiplying copies, and of circulating them when multiplied, existed. Transcription was then in the place of printing ; and transcribers were an active, intelligent class, not less numerous, in proportion to the population, than printers are among ourselves. Speedy trans-

cription, and speedy transmission, were no doubt very difficult in those times ; but men learn to surmount difficulties in proportion as it becomes a necessity of their condition that they should surmount them. We know that by this means, and others, the attention of the commons *was* called, and with some effect, to the recent proceedings of the clergy.

The statute we have mentioned as obtained surreptitiously, for the punishment of alleged heresy, though it had not received the consent of the commons, had been formally enrolled. The commons became aware of this fact, and petitioned the king in the following terms upon it. 'Forasmuch as that statute was made without our consents, and never authorised by us ; and as it never was our meaning to bind ourselves, or our successors, to the prelates, any more than our ancestors have done before us, we pray that the aforesaid statute may be repealed.' We are told that this was done accordingly. But through the management of the prelates this act of repeal was suppressed ; the enactment remained on the statute-book as if valid ; and prosecutions founded upon it were carried on through subsequent years. The times had become much more irregular and unsettled than for some while past, they were about to become more so still, and in intrigues of this nature, the powerful often succeeded, in the face of all right and all law.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 275—277. Parl. Hist. I. 176, 177. Foxe, I. 575, 576. Gibson's Code. Cotton's Abridgment, 285.



Coupled with this rising influence of the clergy, was a change in the disposition of the duke of Lancaster. It is stated that Dr. Hereford, Dr. Reppington, and others who had been prosecuted by Courtney, appealed for protection to the duke ; and that the substance of his answer, after listening to the statement and defence of their doctrine was, that he found the new opinions much more fraught with danger than he had supposed, and that, in his judgment, it became the accused parties to submit to the authorities of the church on such questions.<sup>1</sup>

The fact is, the duke had become intent on conducting an expedition into Portugal, and he was at this time importuning the parliament to vote the sum of £60,000 for that purpose. The expedition, he insisted, was as much for the honour and safety of England, as for his own advantage, and he pledged himself to repay the sum in three years, 'either in money, or by some acceptable service.' This project so absorbed his attention, as to indispose him to entangle himself with disputes of this nature at such a juncture. The majority in the upper house, moreover, were unfavourable to his proposal, and anything in his conduct that should tend to exasperate the prelates would assuredly be fatal to it. It was not as a religious man, but as a liberal politician, that he had taken part in such discussions, and with a change in the relations of political parties, came a change in his course of proceeding.

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<sup>1</sup> Wood. *Antiq. Oxon.* 193.

With some management, both the lords and commons were brought to concur in the duke's proposal.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of the duke having thus failed them, the reformers had to lay their account with the loss of influence of that kind elsewhere. Devoid of patronage from men of rank, Wycliffe must have appeared, to not a few of his opponents, as standing almost alone—and as all but defenceless. In their eyes, he was, no doubt, as a foe delivered by circumstances into their hands. His recent provocation in addressing his 'Complaint' to the king and parliament, was fresh in their memory; and had put an end to all thought as to his being disposed to remain quiet, if only allowed to be quiet. As he had been hitherto, so he was still, a man of convictions—a man who must have his beliefs, and believing, must therefore speak. He had never been so ardent—as we shall show in its proper place—as about this time, in giving a popular form to his

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<sup>1</sup> Parl. Hist. I. 175, 176. So pleased were the clergy with this altered policy of the duke, that the soldiers in his expedition were blessed with the full measure of indulgence and absolution that had been showered on the followers of bishop Spencer in the Flemish Crusade against the anti-pope. The terms of the absolution provided on the former occasion were as follows:—'By apostolic authority committed to me for this purpose, I absolve thee, A. B., from all thy sins confessed, and for which thou art contrite; and from all those which thou wouldest confess, provided they occurred to thy memory. And together with the full remission of thy sins I grant thee the assurance of the reward of just persons in the life to come. I give thee, moreover, all the privileges of those who undertake an expedition to the Holy Land, and the benefit of the prayers of the universal church, either met in synods, or elsewhere.' Walsingham. 295. Collier, I. 581.

opinions, and in diffusing them by means of tracts and treatises in the language of the people.

We have seen that the proceedings about to be instituted against the Reformer by the convocation assembled in St. Paul's in 1377, were frustrated by the bold intervention of the Duke of Lancaster and Lord Percy. It will be remembered also, that the measures taken by the papal commissioners at Lambeth, about twelve months later, were in the main, abortive,—partly from the fact that the censures then pronounced on the doctrine of the Reformer, were to be of no effect until confirmed by the pontiff; and partly from the fact that at that juncture, the assistance of the civil power, necessary to the enforcement of those censures, could not be obtained. The chief effect of the meeting at Lambeth was, that in 1381 it furnished William de Berton, then chancellor of Oxford, with a pretext for imposing silence on Wycliffe as a public teacher in the university. The synod of 1382 confined its attention, in the first instance, as before stated, to the opinions that should be condemned by its authority as erroneous or heretical: and that done, its next step was to cleanse the university of Oxford from the defilement of such doctrines. It was well known that the measures taken for this last purpose had been acted upon with only a partial measure of success; and that this episcopal meddling with the affairs of the university was anything but acceptable to the civilians, and many beside, resident there. Such, however, was the apparent measure of



success with which this course had been pursued, that the time, it seems, was thought to have arrived, in which something might be done with the arch-heretic John de Wycliffe himself.

The accounts which have reached us in relation to what was done with this view, are in many respects obscure and contradictory. It is pretty manifest, however, that the archbishop and his coadjutors felt, even now, that it became them to proceed with some caution and moderation. If the duke of Lancaster had withdrawn from these controversies, the house of commons had not so done. The temper in which the commons had protested, even in the last parliament, against the attempt made to smuggle a persecuting law into the statute-book without their consents ; and the necessity felt by those who had been the authors of that fraud, to bow before that protest, and to cancel the false enrolment, was a fact of significance enough to suggest that extreme measures might be found to call forth a resistance that would be somewhat inconvenient. There is no reason to suppose that the duke of Lancaster, or other influential men, had ceased to respect the doctrine of the reformers in so far as it tended to check the encroachments of an ambitious priesthood on the just independence of the laity and of the civil power.<sup>1</sup> Whatever tended to curb the arrogance

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<sup>1</sup> The determination of the English parliament to oppose its strong hand to the avarice and meddling of the papal court, had never been

and avarice of the higher clergy, continued, beyond doubt, to be regarded by such men, as tending to the public good. So also in the commons—the opinions of the men sent to parliament from year to year by the commonalty, were still, for the most part, strongly in favour of the new doctrines, within the limits stated. But the strictly theological dogmas of the church, involved many questions in relation to which these secular lords and sturdy commoners did not much concern themselves. On all these grounds

greater than was manifested during the subsequent years of this reign. It was during this interval that the memorable statute of *præmunire* was published in its ultimate and severest form; and in consonance with the spirit of that statute, Richard exacted an oath from the principal agent of the papal court in this country to the following effect:—‘I will not do, permit, or cause to be done, any thing detrimental to the royal prerogative, or the laws of this kingdom; I will not execute any papal bull or mandate, or suffer such to be executed, as may be prejudicial to the king, the rights of the crown, or the constitution of the realm; I will not receive or publish any of the pope’s letters, except such as I shall deliver, as soon as possible, to the king’s council; I will not remit or export any money or plate out of the kingdom, without special licence of the king or his council, nor introduce any new usages, without permission from the king; and, lastly, I will keep inviolably all the king’s laws—this I swear, &c.’ Rot. 12. Ric. II. In 1390, an attempt was made by the pontiff to raise a subsidy of one tenth for his benefit from the revenues of the English clergy, and Courtney had given his sanction to this proceeding; but the king, in a letter to the archbishop, commanded him to abstain from all participation in this proposal, and not to pay to the pope’s agents, but to return to the contributors, whatever may have been raised in pursuance of it. Ibid. 13 Ric. II. In this year also, the famous statute of Provisors, prohibiting the papal nominations to vacant benefices, was re-enacted with still heavier penalties. Its language is:—‘If any man shall bring within this

it appears to have been concluded, that the safer course to pursue towards Wycliffe would be, to restrict proceedings against him, at least for the present, to his doctrine on the Eucharist. This, surely, was a point on which the laity might be expected to defer to the judgment of the clergy.

For this purpose, the usual ecclesiastical machinery is put in motion. The summons, as we suppose, is duly issued, and as duly presented by the proper functionary

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'realm, or send into it, or anywhere within the king's dominions, 'any summons, sentence, or excommunication against any person, 'of whatsoever condition, on the ground of his assent or measures, 'with a view to the execution of the said Statute of Provisors, he 'shall be taken, arrested, and put in prison, and shall forfeit all his 'lands and tenements, goods and chattels, for ever, and incur the 'pain of life and member. And should any prelate give execution to 'any such summons, sentence, or excommunication, his temporalities 'shall be seized, and shall revert to the hands of the king, until due 'correction and redress shall have been made.' Stat. 13 Ric. II. It is true, the English bishops were much displeased with this rigorous mode of proceeding in relation to themselves, as well as to the papacy, and protested against it in their place in parliament, but without much effect. Cotton's Abridgment, 332. The cause of this sympathy between the bishops and the popes is found, in part, in the fact, that the illicit gains thus realized were often divided between them. Thus archbishop Courtney, one of these protesters, received licence from Urban VI., to appoint public notaries, in the name of the pontiff, to confer the degree of doctor on his own authority, to authorize twelve clergymen to hold pluralities, to collate to all benefices said to be at the disposal of the papal court, and to dispose of one prebendal stall in every cathedral within the province of Canterbury. Collier, Eccles. Hist. I. 600. Such was the 'share of profits' policy, which linked these parties together—but the laity saw very clearly into the nature of this compact.



at the old rectory in Lutterworth.<sup>1</sup> Wycliffe does not read it without emotion. His Sunday services do not pass by without a reference to it—and there is no little talk about it at the fire-sides of his flock. Among the honest and simple-minded townsfolk about him there is, we may be sure, no lack of sympathy: many, in such words as strong feeling is not slow to suggest, commend their pastor to Him who is believed to be everywhere, and ever ready to protect his own. But in the midst of so much kindly feeling in the place of his labours as a parish priest, Wycliffe prepares himself for the different scene awaiting him in Oxford.

It is not the first time that Wycliffe has filled his saddle with his face directed for successive days towards Oxford. He so did as a youth, when he cast his parting glance on the old family mansion at Wycliffe, on the dell and stream beneath, and on its surrounding woodlands—when the last music of the waters of the Tees, gave place, as we can fancy, to the swift-recurring foot-sounds of the

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<sup>1</sup> Early in this year, Courtney wrote to the bishop of Lincoln, Wycliffe's diocesan, apprising him of the proceedings about to be instituted against the followers of the pestilent person within his jurisdiction; and while urging that prelate to vigilance and zeal, that the church might be protected against further mischief from that quarter, he takes occasion to commend the bishop for the exemplary manner in which he had hitherto acquitted himself in this respect. The document shows that whatever the bishop of Lincoln might legally and prudently do, to check or annoy the rector of Lutterworth, he had not been slow to do. The letter is in Wilkins's *Concilia*, III. 168.

faithful animal that obeyed his guidance. Change has come since then. His eye has fallen for the first time on the towers, and walls, and gates of 'Oxenforde.' He has become familiar for many long years with its streets, and halls, and dwelling-places, and people. He has been often greeted there by the bold and generous as a man doing some service in the cause of that ancient seat of learning, and of his generation. And there, too, he has been often scrowled upon, and pointed at, as one who, if he should find his deserts, would end his days, as all heretics should end them, amidst the faggots. In this same Oxford, he has been summoned more than once, as he is now summoned in Lutterworth, to make his appearance before the great churchmen of the time, as his public prosecutors and judges. So had he been called from Oxford to London, and you may imagine him in those vexatious journeys, as he seeks refreshment for the horse he rides, and for himself, in such old towns as Great Marlow, Beaconsfield, Highwycombe, or Brentford ; or as he makes his way across that great table-land called Hounslow Heath, notorious then, as long after, for the land-pirates who appeared to find convenient sea-room in that ocean of open surface. The journey of our traveller from Lutterworth to Oxford, will be, for the most part, among roads little frequented, and he will have to accept gratefully, like other wayfarers, the rude accommodation for 'man and beast' that may be found in such

halting-places as Daventry or Towcester, Buckingham or Woodstock.

The array of authority and learning to be met at Oxford on such an occasion, was not a little formidable. In this instance, besides the primate, and the bishops of Lincoln, Norwich, Worcester, Salisbury, and Hereford, there are many doctors in divinity and in law, among whom, the majority are of the religious orders; and in addition to the numbers assembled officially, there is a large gathering of persons whose presence is not official. The occasion is of a sort to be watched with interest, either from hostility to the accused or from sympathy with him, by the authorities of the place generally, by the clergy generally, and by townsmen hardly less than by gownsmen—and history relates that the crowd of that day was made up of contributions from all these classes. Wycliffe has not failed to see that the issues of this ordeal may be of grave import, as concerning himself, and much beside. There are learned divines, and subtle schoolmen, among his judges, ready to prompt and sustain each other by every available expedient: and he appears to have determined to furnish the wits of these censors with the history and analysis of this question, in such form and measure, as it would not be altogether an easy thing to deal with. He there stands, prepared so to speak that plain men, if well disposed, may discern his meaning; but prepared also, so to speak, that the learned and logical authorities which seem to



have him in their power, may be made to feel that the questions, as to what the doctrine of the Eucharist really is, and as to what the teaching of the church concerning it has really been, are by no means so easy of settlement as servile thinkers may be ready to conclude. The hope of *converting* his judges by taking such a course, had not, as we must suppose, any place in his thoughts; but to embarrass their proceedings, as far as possible, by such means, was fairly open to him.

The preacher at the opening of the Convocation was the Chancellor, Dr. Rigge; and its first business, after voting a subsidy to the crown, was to make inquiry concerning the errors and heresies noised abroad as being so rife in that ancient seat of learning. Reppington, it appears, was obliged to repeat a recantation which had been before extorted from him; and measures were taken to secure a similar renunciation of the Wycliffe 'conclusions,' as condemned by the late synod, from all the graduates.<sup>1</sup>

Knighton, in his account of this convention, proceeds to say: 'Likewise there was present John Wycliffe, to make answer on a charge of heresy, as on a previous occasion, about the doctrines or propositions aforesaid. These opinions he utterly repudiated;—protested that he had not held, and would not hold such doctrines; and supporting his assertions, had recourse again to his

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<sup>1</sup> Wood: *Antiq. Univers. Oxon.* 192, 193.

‘mother tongue, a subterfuge of which he had before ‘availed himself.’<sup>1</sup> It is true that Wycliffe had recourse to his mother tongue on this occasion, as well as to the Latin tongue; and happily for his reputation, the statement made by him in each language, in explanation and defence of his doctrine, has come down to us, and will enable us to judge for ourselves concerning the grave charge of having repudiated opinions in the hour of danger, which he had avowed in other circumstances.

It is evident, that Wycliffe, as now put on his defence, did complain that his doctrine had been grossly misrepresented, and that he had often been described as holding opinions the most repugnant to his thoughts—such, for example, as ‘that God ought to obey the devil.’ Concerning opinions of this nature, he might well say that they were such as he ‘had not held, and would not hold.’ Both the papers above mentioned, the English and the Latin, will be found in the appendix; and the language of both, if carefully examined, will be found to be, not a recantation, but a most faithful iteration of the doctrine which the Reformer had taught for years past, for a while as professor in Oxford, and subsequently as a preacher and an author.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Similiter affuit Johannes Wycliff ad respondendum super heretica pravitate ut prius de prædictes conclusionibus sive opinionibus. Qui eis omnino renuncians nec eas tenuisse nec tenere se velle protestans ad maternalis virgæ documentum, quod ei antea pro refugio præsto fuerat advolabit iterum, sub forma quæ sequitur. *Historiæ Anglicanæ Scriptores*, 2649.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix K.

In the spring of the preceding year, the doctrine of Wycliffe as then published in Oxford, was, that in the venerable sacrament of the altar, the body and blood of Christ are present, ‘not *essentially*, nor *substantially*, nor ‘*bodily*, but *figuratively*, or *tropically*, so that Christ is not ‘there truly or verily in his own bodily presence.’ In opposition to this statement, the doctrine of the Church was then defined by his judges in the following terms :— ‘That by the sacramental words, duly pronounced by ‘the priest, the bread and wine upon the altar are ‘*transubstantiated*, or *substantially converted* into the true ‘body and blood of Christ, so that after consecration, ‘*there is not in that venerable sacrament the material bread ‘and wine which before existed*, considered in their own ‘*substances or natures*, but only the species of the same, ‘under which are contained the true body of Christ and ‘his blood, *not figuratively or tropically*, but *essentially*, ‘*substantially*, and *corporally*, so that Christ is verily ‘there in his own proper bodily presence.’

Now in the Latin confession preserved to us, and in the English confession given by Knighton, both of which appear to have been presented at the same time, the Reformer denies the doctrine thus elaborately stated, and asserts the doctrine thus elaborately condemned, in terms the most explicit. That there is *a* sense in which the bread *is* the body of Christ, he asserts now, as he had ever done, and on this point his language is sometimes obscure ; but ‘I dare not say,’ he writes, ‘that the bread



‘ becomes the body of Christ *essentially, substantially, corporally, or identically.*’ This, it will be seen, is what he was *required* to say, but this he dares not say, this he does not say, this he cannot be brought to say. In whatever sense Christ may be said to be present in the sacrament in question, *it is not in any such sense that the wine ceases to be properly wine, the bread properly bread.* No such process takes place as the word *transubstantiation* had been introduced and used to denote. The natural substances in both cases do remain, and they are Christ’s blood, and Christ’s body, sacramentally and symbolically, and in no higher sense. ‘ If some idiot should demand ‘ how the bread may be the body of Christ, and still remain the same, according to its own substance and ‘ nature ; let him bear in mind,’ says the Reformer, ‘ his faith in the Incarnation, and say how two different ‘ natures may be united, and still both may not be the ‘ same nature.’<sup>1</sup> So that as humanity did not cease to be

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<sup>1</sup> The following passages may be taken as evidence of the manner in which the Reformer expressed himself generally on this subject, and on occasions much less critical and formal than that which presented itself at Oxford. The extracts are from homilies delivered to his congregation from the pulpit at Lutterworth :—‘ Christ saith, and saints ‘ after, it is verily Christ’s own body in the form of bread, as Christian ‘ men believe, and neither *an accident without a subject*, nor *naught*, as ‘ heretics say.’ On Ephes. iv. ‘ Would God that men took heed to ‘ the speech of Paul in this place, both to hold virtues and to flee ‘ heresies, for both are needful to men. Then men should hear God’s ‘ word gladly, and despise fables, and *err not in the sacred host*, but ‘ grant that it is *both things, both bread and God’s body.*’ On 1 Thess.

humanity, when assumed by the divinity, the bread and wine do not cease to be possessed of their own nature, when used to sacramental purposes. In short, his exact words are, 'we see the venerable sacrament of the altar 'to be naturally bread and wine, but sacramentally the 'body and blood of Christ; while our adversaries adore 'this sacrament, not as being at all bread and wine, but 'as the body and the blood of Christ.' The authority of scripture, and of distinguished ecclesiastical writers, is largely appealed to in support of these views.

In the English confession, the statement of the Reformer is to the same effect. The bread is in a sense, 'God's body,' but in no such sense that it ever ceases to

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iv. So on the words, 'that rock was Christ,' he exclaims—'Would 'God that heretics in the matter of the sacred host, understood these 'subtle words to the intent of the Holy Ghost, then should they not 'fear to grant that this bread *is* God's body.' In his work 'Against the Blasphemies of the Friars,' (Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83,) a manuscript extending to about forty pages, and written after this time, he asserts, with equal plainness, that the bread continues after consecration, and that the bread so continuing, is God's body in the form of bread—'Since bodily eating was bidden of Christ, and this bodily 'eating might not be *unless there were bread, then the bread lasts after 'the sacreding.*' 'The white thing and round, that the priest consecrates, like to the unconsecrated host, and which is broken and 'eaten, *is verily God's body in the form of bread.*' We might multiply passages to this effect from many sources, so as to fill many pages. Our object in citing these expressions is not to indicate our strict approval of them, but simply to show the identity of the Reformer's language on this subject on all occasions—whether writing treatises, preaching at Lutterworth, or delivering his confession before the convocation at Oxford.

be bread—‘*it is both together.*’ In this paper, as in the preceding, he cannot refrain from denouncing anew the absurdity of the men, who, as the consequence of denying that the bread remains bread, are shut up to the necessity of believing in the existence of a quality without a substance, and of declaring that which seems to be bread in the sacrament, to be in no sense the body of Christ. ‘Great diversity is between us who believe that ‘this sacrament is in its nature true bread, and sacramentally God’s body; and heretics who believe and ‘teach that this sacrament may in no wise be God’s ‘body.’ It signifies nothing to admonish the Reformer, that upon this showing, the Church has erred for many hundred winters, and saints have died in error; his reply is, that the loosing of Satan, as foretold by John, has filled the world with lies on this subject; and that the earthquake which so terrified the Courtney synod in London, was the voice of God speaking in protest against the upholding of such falsehoods.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Knighton tells us, (De Event. Angliæ, 2654,) that Dr. Rigge was succeeded immediately by Dr. William de Berton, as chancellor—the person who signalized himself as chancellor in 1381, by publicly condemning the doctrine of Wycliffe on the Eucharist, and enjoining silence upon the reformer on that topic—and that on being re-elected Berton issued a mandate prohibiting the students from listening to any one who should teach either of the following conclusions:—‘That in ‘the sacrament of the altar *the substance of material bread and wine does ‘really remain after consecration;*’ or, ‘That in that venerable sacrament there is *not* the body and blood of Christ *equally*, nor *substantially*, nor even *corporally*, so that Christ is not truly there in *his own*



Our readers, we think, will feel that this is not exactly the language to admit of being construed as a recantation, or as betraying any thing like a feeling of pusillanimity. Not only does the confessor reiterate the strongest things he had ever said in exposition of his doctrine, but he does this in a manner that may be described as almost gratuitously offensive to his opponents, and to none more so than to the men who were before him as his judges. In so expressing himself, he must, we conceive, have laid his account with having, in all probability, some experience of the 'strong prison,' and other penalties, where-with, if Churchmen may so order it, all such doctrines were now to be suppressed.

How it came to pass that the Reformer was allowed to return quietly to his rectory, is one of those points in his career on which we wish for further evidence than the lights of that age have supplied to our own. It is

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*'proper corporal presence.'* This is the doctrine Berton had condemned in 1381, and this, it will be seen, is the doctrine distinctly professed by Wycliffe in the schools of that year, and now before the convocation in the year following. The penalty annexed to this mandate, was the sentence of the greater excommunication; the intention being, it is said, that men holding such views might be silenced by the want of an auditory, if from no other cause. Curious enough, Wood, who describes Wycliffe's confession as a recantation, is the writer who informs us that it 'was encountered by no less than six several antagonists immediately after its publication,' as being most heretical! These polemics were John Tyssington, Thomas Winterton, John Welles, Ughtred Bolton, Simon Southry, and this same William de Berton. All, except Berton, were either monks or friars.

manifest that it was not deemed expedient to pursue any other course towards him. In adopting extreme measures, the prelates and their assistants had to bear in mind, as we have shown, that the approval, even of the nobles, was not to be greatly relied upon, inasmuch as during their whole life it had been no small part of their parliamentary duty to protest against clerical encroachment, and to do what might be done towards counteracting it: while no man in England had done so much as John de Wycliffe, to encourage them in this policy, and to bring the opinion and sympathy of the community to their side. But if there was room to fear that even the lords would not be found to sanction severe proceedings in such cases, much more room was there to apprehend that the commons would openly denounce them, and that the people generally would do so still more loudly.<sup>1</sup> Such a

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<sup>1</sup> The following is the language of the famous statute of *Præmunire*, as adopted by the two houses, and approved by the king, a few years later:—‘Whereupon, our said Lord, the King, by the assent aforesaid, and at the request of the said commons, hath ordained, that if any man shall purchase or pursue, or cause to be purchased or pursued, in the court of Rome or elsewhere, any such Translations, Processes, or Sentences of Excommunication—bulls, instruments, or any other things whatsoever, which touch the king, as against him, his crown, and his royalty, or his realm, as is aforesaid; and they who bring such things within the realm, or receive them, or make any notification of them, or any other execution of them whatsoever, within the said realm, or without,—that they, their Notaries, Procurators, Maintainers, Abettors, Fautors, and Counsellors, shall be put out of the king’s protection, and their lands and tenements, goods and chattels, be forfeited to our Lord the King; and that they be at-

relation of parties, and such a state of opinion and feeling on religious subjects in the middle age, must be admitted to have been somewhat peculiar—but it is clear that it existed. How it came to exist we have in part explained ; and, as we shall see, it was ere long to give place to a state of things much less favourable to freedom of thought, and much more of the kind that obtained elsewhere in those times.

The age of Chaucer and Wycliffe was as the morning light in our history ; the streaks of day which then crossed the horizon, and threw their beautiful influences over the world beneath, were for a season over-clouded : but they were as heralds, nevertheless, proclaiming the sure rising of the sun. Such was the often-repeated prophecy of Wycliffe concerning the times in which he lived : and we are quite safe in believing that it was the force of circumstances, and not inclination, which disposed the powers arrayed against him to treat him with such a show of forbearance. To cover the virtual defeat which

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'tached by their bodies, if they may be found, and brought before the king and his council, there to answer to the cases aforesaid, or that process be made against them by *Præmunire facias*, in manner as it is ordained in other Statutes of Provisors.' Ric. II. cap. 5. Precautions thus stringent suggest that the abuse to which they were opposed must have been great and inveterate, and that the indignation against it must have become both very general and very powerful. Martin V. declared, that the effect of this statute was such, that his nuncios were 'more coarsely used in this Christian country than in the lands of the Turk or the Saracen.' Collier's Eccles. Hist. I. 596.



such a policy might seem to betray, it was pretended that the Reformer had so far explained, or so far recanted his obnoxious opinions, as to have entitled himself to such clemency ; and from that time to our own, his enemies have not ceased to repeat this calumny. The contents of this chapter will, I trust, enable the reader to determine for himself how this question really stands.

When the Reformer appeared before the convocation in St. Paul's, the dispute between Courtney and Lancaster altogether frustrated the intended proceedings. When he stood in the presence of the papal commissioners at Lambeth, he gave answer to the 'conclusions' urged against him in some instances obscurely, but in respect to some five-sixths of the whole series, and those the conclusions which set forth the most obnoxious of his opinions, his replies were direct, explicit, and such as not only expressed his adherence to the errors and heresies imputed to him, but presented reasons in support of them. When opposed subsequently, on the matter of the Eucharist, by the authorities of Oxford, he reiterates his doctrine, he withdraws from the University rather than abstain from the teaching of it, and he gives himself with more earnestness than ever to the labour of diffusing the proscribed tenets from the pulpit, and in publications addressed to all classes of the community, from the king and the parliament, to the humblest of the people. And now, when put to the question by a gathering of prelates, of the religious orders, and others,

in Oxford, touching the doctrine of transubstantiation, we not only hear him persisting in the rejection of that dogma, in the very terms he had used in respect to it elsewhere—but we find him so doing, in a tone which might be more justly censured on account of the scorn and defiance which it seems to breathe, than as betraying the influence of fear.<sup>1</sup>

It is recorded of Dr. Nicholas Hereford, the well-known disciple of Wycliffe, that at a late period of life he was summoned to appear before the pope, that he might answer there concerning the dangerous opinions still attributed to him; that he obeyed this summons, that the concessions he was prepared to make, material as they seemed to be, were not deemed satisfactory, and that he was in consequence cast into prison, but that the logic of the dungeon wrought no further change in him, and that he would probably have perished in his cell, had not an insurrection among the subjects of the pope, which threw open all the prisons in the domain of his holiness, given the prisoner a chance of escape of which he was not slow to avail himself.<sup>2</sup>

We have a document from the pen of Wycliffe which shows that the policy acted upon with this measure of

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning the fact of Wycliffe's presence before the Convocation in Oxford in 1382, about which some doubt has been raised, See Appendix L.

<sup>2</sup> Knighton, 2675.

success in the case of the disciple, had been attempted before in the case of the master. The return of Wycliffe, after his last appearance at Oxford, to the free discharge of his duties as rector of Lutterworth, and to the labours as an author which occupied him there, appears to have been viewed with no little dissatisfaction at the papal court. It was felt, that could he be once brought before that court, the authorities there would not fail to command the means that should bring his powers of mischief to an end. The Reformer, it seems, had a valid reason for disregarding the citation, in the impaired state of his health at the time of its reaching him ; and that reason being in itself sufficient, he rests upon it. But in his reply, he takes occasion, in a tone of keen, though subdued, sarcasm, to convey some wholesome lessons to the ears of his holiness. His letter is given in the appendix : it is in substance as follows :

‘ I am ready cheerfully to tell to all true men the faith  
‘ which I hold, and especially to the Pope.

‘ For I suppose that if my faith be rightful, and given  
‘ of God, the Pope will gladly conserve it ; and that if  
‘ my faith be error, the Pope is especially the person  
‘ wisely to amend it.

‘ Beyond this, I suppose the Gospel of Christ to be a  
‘ part of the body of God’s law ; and as Jesus Christ who  
‘ gave this gospel in his own person to mankind, is very  
‘ God and very man, this law, on this ground, must  
‘ surpass all other laws ; and of all men living on earth



‘ the pope is the man most obliged to the keeping of this  
‘ gospel.

‘ For the pope is called the highest vicar that Christ  
‘ hath here on earth, and the highness of a vicar of Christ  
‘ is not to be measured by worldly highness, but in this,  
‘ that he is the highest vicar who followeth Christ more  
‘ than other men in virtuous living—for thus the Gospel  
‘ teacheth. This, as I believe, is the doctrine of Christ  
‘ and of the gospel, who during the time he walked here  
‘ was one of the humblest of men, both in spirit and  
‘ possessions, for he said he had not where to rest his  
‘ head.

‘ And beyond this, I believe that no man should follow  
‘ the pope, no nor any saint that is now in heaven,  
‘ except inasmuch as he shall follow Christ—for James  
‘ and John erred, and Peter and Paul sinned.

‘ This also I take to be wholesome counsel, that the  
‘ pope should leave his worldly lordships to worldly lords,  
‘ as Christ did, and that he speedily see to it that all his  
‘ clergy do the same—for so did Christ, and so taught  
‘ his disciples, until the fiend came, who hath blinded  
‘ this world. If I err in so thinking, I will consent  
‘ meekly to be amended, even by death, if reason would,  
‘ for that I hope were good for me.

‘ And if I might with God's will travel in person to  
‘ the pope, I would, but necessity saith the contrary,  
‘ and teacheth me to obey God rather than men. And  
‘ our pope will not, I suppose, show himself Antichrist,

‘ by working to the contrary of the will of Christ. For  
‘ if by himself, or by any of his, he will summons against  
‘ reason, and persist in it, he is an open Antichrist.  
‘ Peter was not excused because of his good intentions  
‘ when Christ called him Satan; and so blind intent  
‘ and wicked counsel in this case will not excuse the  
‘ pope, and to require true priests to travel more than  
‘ they may, would be to show himself Antichrist. There-  
‘ fore, pray we, that the good intent of our Urban VI.  
‘ be not quenched by his enemies— for a man’s chief  
‘ enemies, as Christ saith, are those of his own house-  
‘ hold.’<sup>1</sup>

When Wycliffe says that if he could have travelled to the papal court, he would have so done, we can suppose that he spoke sincerely, but, at the same time, with some reservation—for he must have known, that to have taken such a step without a safe conduct, would have been to expose himself to a crushing tyranny from which nothing but a miracle could have saved him.

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<sup>1</sup> Foxe I. 581, 582. Foxe says, that Urban was too much occupied just now in his wars with the Anti-pope, to concern himself greatly with Wycliffe or his affairs. Ibid. Appendix M.



## CHAPTER X.

### WYCLIFFE AND THE ENGLISH BIBLE.



N the old time, revelation came to man in the first instance in an oral form ; and, as this fact supposes, it came to each man in his own tongue. The successive portions of the Old Testament were delivered to the Hebrew people in their own language—came upon them in living words, from the lips of living prophets, So it was with all that the New Testament teaches. The oral preceded the written, and the written, when it came, came, as far as might be, to every man, in the language of his own country and household.

Strange that men should have set themselves to undo, in this respect, what their Maker had done—done through so many centuries, and by such diversities of tongues, bestowed by miracle to that end. But the time did come, when the priest undertook, in this sense, to *keep* knowledge—reserving it to himself, as a concealed trea-



sure, in place of dispensing it freely to the people, as being theirs of right.

We are only too familiar with the pretexts under which this was attempted, and so long achieved. 'The people are not to be trusted. They will misinterpret and misapply the record if thus placed in their hands, and the effect will be evil and not good.' It would not seem to have occurred to these men to ask—whether a priesthood, in such case, would be likely to prove itself more trustworthy than a people. The great authority of religion being restricted, in this manner, to their own keeping—is not the priesthood in danger, in such circumstances, of corrupting the religion so as to serve its own ends? The time we see has come in which this *may* be done, and done with something more inviting in the distance than mere impunity. Not only is there temptation in this direction, it may be safely described as a temptation much too potent to be resisted by our frail nature. History is decisive on this point. The withdrawment of the scriptures from the hands of the people, was a withdrawment of the light, and the deeds natural to the state of darkness which ensued were the result. The Christianity of the priesthood, no longer confronted with the teachings of Scripture, ceased to be the Christianity of Scripture. This unnatural, vicious, and most mischievous relation of things, appears to have been constantly present to the mind of Wycliffe during the later years of his life. By degrees, accordingly, it became his fixed purpose to

give to the people of England, to the largest extent possible in the circumstances of that age, not merely fragments of the Bible, but the whole Bible, in their mother-tongue. It was the authority to which he was himself constantly appealing—he would do his best that the humblest of the people might be empowered to follow his example in that respect.

The safe keeping of such a revelation as we possess, can never lie with a priesthood alone, nor with the common people alone. Scholarship has its work to do in relation to it, and so has the robust and natural intelligence of our working-day humanity. The best conservation of a revealed religion, can never result from either of these influences taken separately—it must come from the two taken together. If a people will be likely to err from tendencies of one sort, a priesthood will be quite as likely to err from tendencies of another sort. The checks which each supplies are for the good of each. The effect is the equilibrium in which there is safety. The clergy, if left to themselves, become arbitrary, corrupt, and degenerate into a caste; and the people, if left without spiritual guides, become bewildered, disorderly, and demoralized.

Before the age of Wycliffe, the knowledge of the scriptures accessible to the laity was very limited. The Christianity of the Britons retired with them into their mountain fastnesses. We have no reason to suppose that the pastors of the British Churches withheld the sacred

writings from their flocks with intention, or on any such principle as was avowed by the clergy of a later age. But on the other hand, the circumstances of those times warrant us in concluding, that almost the only knowledge of the scriptures possessed by that people, was the knowledge which had come to them by means of oral teaching. The Latin language, indeed, had become so familiar to them during the sway of the Romans, that according to Gildas, their historian, Britain might have been described as a Roman, rather than a British island ; and it is possible that through the medium of that language, some portions of the inspired records became known to a few of the better educated and more wealthy. But we have nothing to warrant us in extending our conjectures further in this direction.<sup>1</sup>

The Saxons became possessors of this southern portion of our island as pagans ; and after the arrival of Augustine and his monks, nearly a century passed before these rude settlers were brought to their very imperfect profession of Christianity. In the seventh century, Cedman, an Anglo-Saxon monk, wrote sacred poetry in his native tongue, and appears to have been the first of his race who did so. Among his productions is a translation, if

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<sup>1</sup> Ussher's *Britan. Eccles. Antiq. and Religion of the Ancient Irish and British*. Stillingfleet's *Antiquities of the British Churches*. Collier's *Eccles. Hist.* I. 1—46. Tacitus. *Vita Agric.* *Researches into the Ecclesiastical and Political State of Ancient Britain under the Roman Emperors*, by the Rev. Francis Thackeray, M.A.



such it may be called, of portions of the Old Testament, into Anglo-Saxon rhyme. This rhyming version bears all the marks of the antiquity assigned to it. It includes the leading events of Old Testament history—as the creation of the world, the fall of man, the deluge, the departure from Egypt, the entrance upon Canaan, and some subsequent occurrences.<sup>1</sup>

In the next century, Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne; and Guthlac, the celebrated anchorite, are among the authors who produced Anglo-saxon versions of the psalms.<sup>2</sup> In the same age, the venerable Bede completed a translation of St. John's Gospel. This was a literal rendering of the sacred narrative into the spoken language of the time, and was the first attempt of its kind in our history.<sup>3</sup> The Durham Book, attributed on probable evidence to about the age of Alfred, is a manuscript copy of the Latin Gospels, with a Saxon version interlined. In the Bodleian library is a manuscript of the same portion of the sacred volume, with a Saxon translation, introduced after the same manner, the translation being made apparently sometime in the tenth century. This manuscript is known by the name of the Rushworth Gloss. Among the valuable manuscripts in Benet college, Cambridge, is a third copy of the gospels

<sup>1</sup> Bede Hist. B. IV. c. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Baleus de Script. Brit. Cent. I. Baber's New Testament, translated by Dr. Wiclif. Historical Account, lviii.

<sup>3</sup> Cuthberti Vita Ven. Bedæ.

in the Saxon tongue, written a little before the conquest ; and a fourth, which appears to have been copied from the former, and to be of the same period, may be seen in the Bodleian.<sup>1</sup> But an ecclesiastic who did more than all his brethren towards presenting the Scriptures to his countrymen in their native language, was Elfric. This laborious scholar lived in the reign of Ethelred, and subscribes himself at different periods as monk, mass-priest, and abbot. We learn from himself that, at the request of various persons, he had translated the Pentateuch, the books of Joshua and Judges ; those of Esther, Job, and Judith, also the two books of the Maccabees, with a part of the first and second book of Kings.<sup>2</sup> Alfred the Great prefixed a translation of certain passages from the Mosaic writings to his code of laws, and at the time of his death had made considerable progress in a Saxon version of the Psalms.<sup>3</sup> Such is the

<sup>1</sup> Baber's Historical Account, lix. lx. Wycliffe's Bible, Pref. i. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Wycliffe's Bible, Pref. ii. iii. Baber's Historical Account, lxii. lxiii. Turner's Anglo-Saxons, Book X. c. iii.

<sup>3</sup> ' Alfred, in his zeal for the improvement of his country, did not overlook the importance of the vernacular Scripture. At the head of his laws, he set in Anglo-Saxon, the Ten Commandments, with such of the Mosaic injunctions in the three following chapters of Exodus, as were most to his purpose. What other parts of the Bible he translated, it is difficult to determine. A remarkable passage in his preface to the pastoral of Pope Gregory, leaves no room to doubt, that if the more necessary portions of Holy Writ were not made accessible to his subjects in their own tongue, it was only because this wise and pious Prince failed of the opportunity to accomplish his wishes.' Wycliffe's Bible, Pref. ii.

extent of our information on this interesting question as connected with the Anglo-Saxon period of our history.

The Anglo-Norman clergy were far more competent than the clergy who had preceded them, to have given the scriptures to the people in their own tongue, had they been so disposed. But by this time, the ecclesiastical system had become more than ever hostile, both in form and spirit, to all such views of the relation between the clergy and the people, as might have disposed the former to attempt the elevation of the latter by any such means. Small fragments of the Sacred Scriptures would become familiar to the people, as having their place in the ritual of the period, and as expounded to them on the comparatively rare occasions when preaching became a part of the church service. But even the portions of the sacred text which thus came in their way, were too often given in a form so isolated, and in connexion with interpretations so artful and untrue, as to produce injurious, rather than wholesome impressions.

The first attempt after the Conquest, to place any continuous account of the contents of the Sacred Scriptures before the people of England in their own language, appears to have been made by the author of a rhyming paraphrase on the Gospels, and on the Acts of the Apostles, intitled '*Ormulum*.'<sup>1</sup> The next production of

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<sup>1</sup> MSS. Junius I. Bodleian. 'Highly valuable as it is in a philolo-



this nature known to us, consists of a huge volume of metrical pieces, under the title of *Salus Animæ*, or in English 'Sowlehele.' The object of the writer or transcriber of this volume appears to have been, to furnish a complete body of legendary and scriptural history in verse, or rather to collect in one view, all the religious history he could bring together. But it professes to give an outline of the contents both of the Old and New Testaments, and its composition dates somewhere towards the close of the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In Benet College, Cambridge, there is another work of the same description, produced about the same time, and containing notices of the principal events recorded in the books of Genesis and Exodus. In the same library, there is also a manuscript translation of the Psalms in English metre, made about the year 1300; and two transcripts of this work, of nearly the same antiquity, have been preserved—one in the Bodleian library, the other in that of Sir Robert Cotton.<sup>2</sup>

But it is not until we come to about the middle of the fourteenth century—that is, not until five and twenty years after the birth of Wycliffe—that we trace the remotest attempt to produce a literal translation, even

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'gical point of view, yet, never proceeding probably beyond the original copy of the author, it could have been of little or no use in religious teaching.' Wycliffe's Bible, Pref. iii.

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Bodleian, 779. Wharton's History of English Poetry, Sect. i. Baber's Historical Account, lxiv. lxv. <sup>2</sup> Ibid.

of detached portions, of the sacred writings. The effort of this nature then made was by Richard Roll, called the Hermit of Hampole. His translations were restricted to little more than half the book of Psalms, and to these renderings he annexed a devotional commentary. Contemporary with this recluse, were some well-disposed men among the clergy, who produced translations of such passages from the scriptures as were prominent in the offices of the church, and some ventured so far as to attempt a complete translation of an Epistle or a Gospel. Several of the Epistles, and parts of the Gospels by Mark and Luke, are among the fruit of this labour that has descended to our time. But it should be added, that even these versions—which are of various merit—are generally guarded by a commentary.<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that many years since the Rev. Josiah Forshall and Sir Frederick Madden were engaged to prepare an edition of Wycliffe's Bible, to be issued from the Oxford University press. In 1850, this long-promised publication made its appearance, in five handsome quarto volumes. The projectors of this undertaking, and those who have given themselves with so much patient labour to the prosecution of it, are entitled to the warmest acknowledgments from every sincere Protestant, from every scholar, and from our country at

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<sup>1</sup> Wycliffe's Bible, Pref. IV. V. Baber's Historical Account, lxvi, lxvii.

large. If the research of the editors has not led to anything very remarkable—one point perhaps excepted—in the way of discovery, the account they have given of existing MSS. including translations of the whole, or of parts, of the sacred volume, either by Wycliffe, or by his followers ; the care with which the MSS. in this greatly enlarged catalogue have been examined and collated ; and the result as given us, not only in the text which they have published, but in the copious emendations and readings subjoined to it—are altogether such as to promise that the publication bearing their names, will form a monument of our British literature as lasting as the language.

But it is with the Preface and ‘Prologue’ included in the preliminary matter of the first volume of this work that we are, in this place, most concerned. Down to the year 1360, say the editors, ‘the Psalter appears to be ‘the only book of scripture which had been entirely ‘rendered into English. Within less than twenty-five ‘years from that date, a prose version of the whole ‘Bible, including as well the apocryphal as the canonical ‘books, had been completed, and was in circulation ‘among the people. For this invaluable gift England is ‘indebted to John Wycliffe. It may be impossible to ‘determine with certainty the exact share which his ‘own pen had in the translation, but there can be no ‘doubt that he took a part in the labour of producing it, and that the accomplishment of the work must



‘ be attributed mainly to his zeal, encouragement, and  
‘ direction. It was not, probably, until his later years,  
‘ that Wycliffe matured so extensive a design. He was  
‘ led to the undertaking slowly and gradually ; and it  
‘ was not completed until after several preliminary  
‘ efforts. It is interesting to mark the several steps by  
‘ which he advanced in the interpretation and diffusion  
‘ of the Holy Scriptures. The evidence, indeed, which  
‘ bears upon the point is scanty, and only sufficient, it  
‘ should be remembered, to afford to the conclusions  
‘ which it suggests, a presumption of their truth.’

Consistency demands that the Romanist should withhold the Scriptures from the laity. It is the authority of the church—an authority made infallible for that purpose—which is to determine the meaning of Scripture, not the judgment of private persons. It is of the essence of such a system that the sacred books should be regarded as designed for the hands of the priesthood, constituting in this case the church, and that they should not be designed for the hands of the people.

Nevertheless, it has been very widely felt among Romanists, that this withholding of the Scriptures from the laity has a very ugly appearance. Much artifice, accordingly, and at times not a little effrontery, have been resorted to, that the shaft directed against them from this quarter might be turned aside.

It has been pretended, for example, that there was nothing really novel in the idea of Wycliffe, when he

contemplated a translation of the whole Bible into English, that simple laymen might read it—that there were good catholics who had done the same thing before him. Even so ingenuous a man as Sir Thomas More took this ground. He is bold enough to declare that the whole Bible had been translated into English before the days of Wycliffe, and that he had himself seen such translations,—copies which he describes as fair and old, and which had been seen by the bishops of the diocese.<sup>1</sup> We do not think Sir Thomas More capable of uttering a falsehood,—and the positiveness with which he speaks on this point has disposed more than one English scholar in the seventeenth century to think that there must be truth in this statement. But the explanation is easy. The copies which Sir Thomas More saw, were no doubt copies of the translation made by Wycliffe and his followers; some of which, it is well known, were in possession of the prelates, and others, in the sixteenth century. Had a translation prior to their own been in existence, the Wycliffites would surely have known it, and would as surely have appealed to it in defence of their own policy. But nothing can be more clear than that they regarded their proceeding in this matter as a novelty; as a

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<sup>1</sup> *Dyalogues*. cvii. cxi. cxx. Ed. 1530. Ussher *De Scripturis de sacris vernaculis*, 155. *Treatise of the Corruptions of Scripture*, by Thomas James, 30. 74. ed. 1612. Henry Wharton early corrected Ussher's mistake on this point. *Specimens of Errors in the History of the Reformation*. Ed. 1693. Wycliffe's Bible, Pref. xxi.

proceeding that would be so regarded by the ruling clergy ; and that great opposition would be made to it, as most contrary to catholic usage, and fraught with great michiefs.

Enough, indeed, was said, in connexion with the first broaching of this purpose, on the part of Wycliffe and his disciples, to foreshadow the hostility which would thus be called forth. There is a passage in Knighton, written not long after the death of Wycliffe, which may be taken as decisive, both as to the judgment of the clergy of those times, concerning the duty of withholding the Scriptures from the people, and as to the part taken by Wycliffe in the effort made to place them in the hands of the people in their own tongue. ‘ Christ,’ says our indignant ecclesiastic, ‘ delivered his gospel to the clergy ‘ and doctors of the church, that they might administer ‘ to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the ‘ states of the times, and the wants of men. But this ‘ master John Wycliffe translated it out of Latin into ‘ English, and thus laid it out more open to the laity, ‘ and to women, who could read, than it had formerly ‘ been to the most learned of the clergy, even to those ‘ of them who had the best understanding. In this ‘ way the gospel-pearl is cast abroad, and trodden ‘ under foot of swine, and that which was before precious ‘ both to clergy and laity, is rendered, as it were, the ‘ common jest of both. The jewel of the church is turned ‘ into the sport of the people, and what had hitherto been ‘ the choice gift of the clergy and of divines, is made for



‘ever common to the laity.’<sup>1</sup> Such is the testimony of Knighton to the opinion and usage of his age on this point. Nothing, in his view, could be further from the thoughts of a good Catholic, than the idea of giving the Sacred Scriptures to the people in their own tongue. To the same effect is the decision of an English council in 1408, with Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury at its head. ‘The translation of the text of Holy Scripture out of one tongue into another, is a dangerous thing, as St. Jerome testifies, because it is not easy to render the verse in all respects faithfully. Therefore, we enact and ordain, that no one henceforth do, by his own authority, translate any text of Holy Scripture into the English tongue, or into any other, by way of book or treatise; nor let any book or treatise now lately composed in the time of John Wycliffe aforesaid, or since, or hereafter to be composed, be read, in whole or in part, in public or in private, under pain of the greater excommunication.’<sup>2</sup> This extract needs no comment.

On a review of all the available evidence on this subject, we are warranted in believing that the idea of trans-

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<sup>1</sup> Knighton. *De Eventibus*. 2644.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, III. 317. The spirit of this enactment was evidently that of the clergy generally in the life-time of Wycliffe. Hence, he describes them, as asserting it to be ‘heresy to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English.’ But this he interprets as ‘a condemnation of the Holy Ghost, who first gave the Scriptures in tongues to the Apostles of Christ, as it is written, that they might speak the word in all languages, that were ordained of God under heaven.’—Wicket.

lating the Bible into the English language originated with the mind of Wycliffe, and that to the men of his time it was in two respects a strictly novel conception—first, as it embraced a literal translation of the entire Bible, nothing more, nothing less ; and second, as it contemplated making this translation accessible to the people, without distinction, and to the utmost extent possible. The object contemplated was the Bible—the Bible in its *completeness*, and without *note* or *comment* ; and the Bible to be in *every man's hands*, as *every man's guide*. This conception, simple as it may appear to us, was a large, a sublime conception, for any man to rise to, and to hold by, in such times.

But the object thus presented to the minds of men, was not one to be realized suddenly. The disciples of Wycliffe, indeed, appear to have entered at once into his views in relation to it, and the idea that the scriptures should be thus placed in the hands of the people, once pronounced, seems to have spread with amazing rapidity. The thought was no sooner in motion, than it lodged itself in a multitude of minds, some regarding it as pregnant with all good, others being no less alive to it as including, in their view, the seeds of every kind of evil. One of the Reformer's short treatises, published while the discussions thus called forth were at their height, and while the work of translation was still in progress, will suffice to indicate the style in which the disputants on either side endeavoured to sustain their cause.

The treatise to which we refer, bears this plain-spoken title. ‘*How Antichrist and his Clerks travail to destroy Holy Writ, and to make Christian men unstable in the faith, and to set their ground in devils of hell.*’<sup>1</sup> The piece begins thus :—‘As our Lord Jesus Christ ordained to make his gospel sadly known, and maintained against heretics, and men out of belief, by the writings of the four Evangelists, so the devil casteth, by Antichrist and his worldly false clerks, to destroy Holy Writ, and the belief of Christian men, by four cursed ways, or false reasonings.’

These four ways are—‘*First*, that the church is of more authority and more credence than any gospel. *Secondly*, that St. Augustine saith he would not believe in the gospel, but if the church taught him so. *Thirdly*, that no man now alive knows which is the gospel, but if it be by approving of the Church. And *fourthly*, if men say that they believe that this is the gospel of Matthew, or John, they ask—Why believest thou that this is the gospel, since, whosoever believeth this hath no cause, except that the church confirmeth it, and teacheth it.

‘*First*, they say that Nicodemus, and many more, wrote the Gospel of Christ’s life and his teaching, and the church put them away, and approved these four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Then the church might as well have put out these four gospels, and have

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<sup>1</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge.



‘ approved the other, since it was in the free-will and power  
 ‘ of the church to approve and condemn which they would,  
 ‘ and to approve and accept what they liked, and *therefore*,  
 ‘ *men should believe more to the church than to any gospel.*’

Wycliffe says in reply—First, these forecasting heretics  
 ‘ understand by the *church*, the *Pope of Rome* and his  
 ‘ *cardinals*, and the *multitudes of worldly clerks*, assenting  
 ‘ *to his simony and worldly lordships, above the kings and*  
 ‘ *emperors of the world.* For else it were not to their  
 ‘ purpose thus to magnify the church. True men, then,  
 ‘ say, that the clergy which *first* was, *knowing men*, and  
 ‘ *holy of life*, were *stirred by the Holy Ghost* to take these  
 ‘ gospels, and to charge not Christian people with more,  
 ‘ since these are enough and profitable to the full, and  
 ‘ these four witnesses were accepted of the Holy Ghost  
 ‘ for many reasons which we may not now tell.’

But the Divine illumination, which enabled the clergy  
 in those times thus to distinguish between the genuine  
 records of inspiration, and all spurious writings, is said  
 to have been sadly wanting in the clergy of the ages  
 which have followed. Speaking of the contemporary  
 priesthood, Wycliffe observes, ‘ Jesus Christ saith his  
 ‘ Gospel is an everlasting testament, but these would  
 ‘ *fordon* (undo—destroy) it with a foul blast from the  
 ‘ *mouth of Antichrist.* Lord! how dare Christian men  
 ‘ maintain such heretics against God’s teaching, and the  
 ‘ peace of Christian people? Such heretics are full un-  
 ‘ able to rule lords and commons, to shrift in preaching

‘ and praying, and to do other points concerning their  
‘ souls’ health, for they destroy them in respect to faith  
‘ and good life, that their own pride, covetousness, and  
‘ lusts may be borne up, and draw all men to hell that  
‘ are ruled by such confessors, false preachers, and false  
‘ counsellors.’

Having thus dismissed the thought of the Holy Ghost as dwelling with such men, Wycliffe then proceeds to what he describes as the “ Second Wheel ” in the machine of this adversary. ‘ They bear,’ he writes, ‘ upon  
‘ Austin, that he saith he would not believe in the Gos-  
‘ pel, but if the church saith it is true. We then answer,  
‘ that Austin saith to this intent, that he would not be-  
‘ lieve thereto, unless *Christ*, head of holy church, and  
‘ *Apostles* of Christ, and *saints now in heaven*, which are  
‘ in truth, holy church, said and approved the Gospel.  
‘ And this understanding is full true, and according to  
‘ the letter of Austin ; but they understand it thus, that  
‘ *unless* the cursed *multitude of worldly clerks* approve  
‘ this for the Gospel, Austin would not believe to the  
‘ Gospel of Jesus Christ.’ But to make the church consist, after this manner, of a degenerate priesthood, to the exclusion of the body of the faithful, and then to reason about church authority from a church so constituted, is said to be to make everything valuable in the religion of Christ depend on approval from men who have shown themselves its enemies—‘ but what heresy,’ he exclaims, ‘ might sooner destroy the belief of Christian men ? And

‘ God forbid that Austin should be found in poisonous  
 ‘ heresy. It is accursed falsehood, therefore, to slander  
 ‘ Austin with this accursed error, by the name of this  
 ‘ holy doctor colouring their own false understanding  
 ‘ and heresy. For by this cursed wheel, Antichrist’s  
 ‘ clerks condemn the faith of Christian men, and the  
 ‘ commandments of God, and points of charity, and bring  
 ‘ in their own wayward laws. *Therefore Christian men*  
 ‘ *should stand to the death for the maintenance of Christ’s*  
 ‘ *Gospel, and the true understanding thereof, obtained by*  
 ‘ *holy life, and great study, and not set their faith nor*  
 ‘ *trust in sinful prelates, and their accursed clerks, nor in*  
 ‘ *their understanding thereof.*’

‘ See you,’ the Reformer proceeds to say, ‘ the third  
 ‘ wheel of Satan’s chair. They say that no man can  
 ‘ know what is the Gospel, but by the approving and  
 ‘ confirming of the church. But true men say that to  
 ‘ their understanding this is full of falsehood. For  
 ‘ Christian men have certainty of belief by the gracious  
 ‘ gift of Jesus Christ, that the truth taught by Christ  
 ‘ and his Apostles is the Gospel, though all the clerks of  
 ‘ Antichrist say never so fast the contrary, and require  
 ‘ men to believe the contrary, on pain of cursing, prison-  
 ‘ ing, and burning. And this belief is not founded on  
 ‘ the pope and his cardinals, for then it might fail and be  
 ‘ undone, as they fail and sometimes be destroyed ; but  
 ‘ on Jesus Christ, God and Man, and, on holy Trinity,  
 ‘ and so it may never fail, except from his default who



‘ should not love God and serve him. For Almighty God  
‘ and his truths, are the foundation of the faith of Chris-  
‘ tian men ; and as St. Paul saith, *other foundation may*  
‘ *no man set, besides that which is set, that is Jesus Christ.*  
‘ Therefore, though Antichrist and all his accursed clerks  
‘ be buried deep in hell for their accursed simony and  
‘ pride, and other sins, yet the Christian’s faith faileth  
‘ not, and plainly because *they* are not the ground thereof,  
‘ but *Jesus Christ is the ground* thereof. For he is our  
‘ God, and our best master, and ready to teach true men  
‘ all things profitable and needful for their souls.’

‘ The fourth wheel of Belial’s cart is this,—If Christian  
‘ men say they know by belief that this is Christ’s Gos-  
‘ pel, these malicious heretics ask—*Why* they believe  
‘ that this is Gospel ? But true men ask of them again,  
‘ why they believe that God is God, and if they tell  
‘ a sufficient reason, we can tell as good a reason why  
‘ we believe that this is Christ’s Gospel. *But they*  
‘ *say, whatever the prelates teach, teach openly, and main-*  
‘ *tain stedfastly, were of as great authority, or more, than*  
‘ *is Christ’s Gospel,* and so they would destroy Holy Writ  
‘ and Christian faith, and maintain that *whatever they do*  
‘ *is no sin.* But Christian men take their faith of God  
‘ by his gracious gift, when he giveth to them knowledge  
‘ and understanding of truths needful to save men’s  
‘ souls by grace, to assent in their hearts to such truths.  
‘ And this men call faith, and of this faith Christian men  
‘ are more certain than any man is of mere worldly

‘ things by any bodily wit—(outward sense.) And, there-  
‘ fore, Christ reproveth most defect of belief, both in the  
‘ Jews and his disciples, and therefore Christ’s apostles  
‘ prayed most to have stableness in the faith, for it is  
‘ impossible that any man can please God without faith.  
‘ And so Christ prayed principally that the faith of  
‘ Peter, and of the other disciples, might not fail for ever.  
‘ And God’s law telleth how by faith saints wrought all  
‘ the great wonders and miracles that they did. And if  
‘ Antichrist here say that each man may feign that he  
‘ has a right faith, and a good understanding of Holy  
‘ Writ, when he is in error—*let a man seek in all things*  
‘ *truly the honour of God, and live justly to God and man,*  
‘ *and God will not fail to him in anything that is needful*  
‘ *to him, neither in faith, nor in understanding, nor in*  
‘ *answer against his enemies.*’

This piece concludes thus :—‘ God Almighty streng-  
‘ then his little flock against Antichrist, to seek truly  
‘ the honour of Christ and the salvation of men’s souls,  
‘ to despise the feigned power of Antichrist, and willingly  
‘ and joyfully to suffer reproof in the world for the name  
‘ of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, to give good example  
‘ to others to follow, and to conquer the high bliss of  
‘ heaven by glorious martyrdom as other saints did be-  
‘ fore ! Jesus, for thine endless might, endless wisdom,  
‘ endless goodness and charity, grant to us sinful wretches  
‘ this love ! Amen ! ’

So did some men oppose themselves to the notion of

seeking truth from the Scriptures in English, in place of seeking it in the decisions of the church ; and in this manner did Wycliffe prepare his disciples to meet assaults in such forms. It will be seen from the preceding extracts, that the arguments common to the disputants in this controversy since the age of Luther, were in substance anticipated in the age of Wycliffe. The following passage gives a portion of this argument, as relating to the better side, with admirable directness. The treatise from which this extract is taken, was written in English and in Latin ; the English appears to have perished, we give a translation from the Latin.

‘ Those heretics are not to be heard, who imagine that  
‘ temporal lords should not be allowed to possess the law  
‘ of God, but that it is sufficient for them that they  
‘ know what may be learnt concerning it from the lips  
‘ of their priests and prelates.’

‘ As the faith of the church is contained in the Scrip-  
‘ tures, the more these are known in their true meaning  
‘ the better ; and inasmuch as secular men should as-  
‘ suredly understand the faith they profess, that faith  
‘ should be taught them in whatever language may be  
‘ best known to them. Forasmuch, also, as the doctrines  
‘ of our faith are more clearly and exactly expressed in  
‘ the Scriptures, than they may probably be by priests ;  
‘ seeing, if I may so speak, that many prelates are but  
‘ too ignorant of Holy Scripture, while others conceal  
‘ many parts of it ; and as the verbal instructions of



‘priests have many other defects; the conclusion is  
‘abundantly manifest, that believers should ascertain  
‘for themselves what are the true matters of their faith,  
‘by having the Scriptures in a language which they fully  
‘understand. For the laws made by prelates are not to  
‘be received as matters of faith, nor are we to confide in  
‘their public instructions, nor in any of their words,  
‘but as they are founded on Holy Writ,—since according  
‘to the doctrine of Augustine, the Scriptures contain  
‘the whole truth, and this translation of them into Eng-  
‘lish should therefore do at least this good—viz., placing  
‘bishops and priests above suspicion as to the parts of it  
‘which they profess to explain. Other means, such as  
‘the friars, prelates, the pope, may all prove defective;  
‘and to provide against this, Christ and his Apostles  
‘evangelized the greater portion of the world, by mak-  
‘ing known the Scriptures to the people in their own  
‘language. To this end, indeed, did the Holy Spirit  
‘endow them with the knowledge of tongues. Why then  
‘should not the living disciples of Christ do in this res-  
‘pect as they did ?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Doctrina Christiana*, cited by Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, c. v. Walden, a well-known antagonist of Wycliffe, maintained, in opposition to this doctrine of the Reformer, that ‘the decrees of bishops in the church, are of greater weight and dignity than the authority of scripture.’ Walden’s Doc. Trial. lib. II. c. 21. The last article in the eighteen selected by Woodford, in his ‘*adversus Johannem Wiclefum*.’ (Brown *Fasciculus Rerum*, I. 257—265.) is on this question—the scriptures, *versus* the clergy, in which Wycliffe is made to state his doctrine as in the extracts given above, and various points are worked out in reply. On all

On such grounds did Wycliffe commit himself to his labours as a translator of the Scriptures, and to the hostilities and perils to which those labours would expose him. In relation to this portion of his history there are three questions which present themselves as of much interest—first, when did Wycliffe resolve on attempting this great work ; secondly, in what degree did he live to see it accomplished ; and thirdly, had he coadjutors in this labour, and if so, who were they ?

With regard to the first of these questions, it will be remembered that in 1377 the papal commissioners summoned Wycliffe to appear before them at Lambeth, to answer upon a series of charges then preferred against him. We are justified in supposing that the eighteen ‘ conclusions,’ as they are called, which were then produced, embraced all the main points of obnoxious opinion that had been broached by the Reformer up to that time.

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these points the writer shews much zeal, but no great discrimination. Wycliffe never maintained that men should believe nothing, or do nothing, for which a direct sanction could not be found in scripture. He simply insisted that no opinion or usage should be accounted as Christian, that could not be shewn to be *consistent with the letter or spirit* of the *Christian Scriptures*. But to such polemics as Walden and Woodford, it is often convenient to understand him as saying more than this—that is, as pushing his principle so far as to reduce it to an absurdity. The substance of Wycliffe’s maxim may be said to be, that the certainties of revelation were not to be disturbed by the uncertainties of tradition ; and that the interpretation of the Scriptures by the clergy, however helpful that might be to the layman, should never be to him in the place of an interpretation of the Scriptures for himself.

The nature of some of these charges demonstrates, that if any matter of graver import could have been attributed to the accused, the disposition was not wanting to bring it forward, and to give it due prominence. Now it is observable that of two matters, about which so much is said not long afterwards, nothing is said then. Nothing was then said as to his having broached any novel doctrine about the Eucharist; nor as to his having meditated so grave an innovation as that of giving the Scriptures to his countrymen in their own language. These omissions are significant. It is further observable, that in the discussions which took place in Oxford in 1381, and in the following year, about the Eucharist, and which led to the retirement of the Reformer from the University, no mention is made of any such intention or idea in relation to the Scriptures. What is more, in his appeal from the chancellor to the king and parliament, published afterwards, in which he is occupied with other matters of complaint against the clergy, much more than with a defence of his doctrine on the Eucharist, Wycliffe does not place among the prominent articles there enumerated, the withholding of the Scriptures in the mother tongue from the laity. We cannot avoid thinking that this he would have done, had that conception been as matured and fixed in his mind then, as we know it to have been only a few months later. Much stern truth, such as the Reformer must have known would be most unwelcome in many quarters, was sent forth in that



document, but this idea of translating the Bible into English was not there, nor anything tending specially in that direction. Even in the proceedings instituted by Courtney, against the holders of the doctrines of the Reformer, so late as the spring of 1382, in the five and twenty propositions condemned at that time by the synod in the Grey Friars Church, as being either heretical or erroneous, we find no expressions indicating that the obnoxious teachers were contemplating a translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular language. Hereford, Ashton, Reppington, and others, are made to appear at several meetings of this synod; a full record of the proceedings has been preserved; but amidst the different investigations prosecuted, we find no reference to any meditated translation of the scriptures into English, as among the depraved purposes of these delinquents. This negative evidence is to me, not only forcible, but decisive, as to the late—comparatively the *very* late period, at which the Reformer gave himself to this great work.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is not every passage in which Wycliffe speaks of the importance of imparting scriptural knowledge to the people in their own tongue, that he is to be understood as saying that the whole Bible should be given to the laity in that language. Where he does speak explicitly on this point, it will be found, we think, that such expressions occur in compositions of a late date. He often expressed himself strongly in this *direction*, long before he expressed himself distinctly to this *effect*. The editors of the Wycliffe Bible have not, perhaps, borne this distinction sufficiently in mind, in respect to some extracts they have given from the real or supposed writings of the Reformer. Pref. viii—xv.

In 1381 Wycliffe is silenced in Oxford. He then retires to Lutterworth—not to be inactive, but evidently to devise new methods of prosecuting the work of reformation. One result we see, in the almost incredible number of Tracts and Treatises in English, issued by him during the next three years. Had he been suffered to continue his lectures among the students at Oxford, it is probable that this eminently popular department of his labours would not have filled by any means so large a space. The circumstances which disposed him to multiply these appeals to the people in their own language, appear to have led him, and by a very natural

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The second tract in the MS. volume in the University Library, Cambridge, is, we doubt not, from the pen of Wycliffe, and was prefixed to his translation of Clement Lanthony's Harmony of the Gospels, either at the time when the translation was made, or subsequently. In this piece he speaks forcibly on the subject now before us. 'Covetous clerks of this world reply and say, that laymen be liable soon to err, and therefore they should not dispute of the Christian faith. Alas! alas! what cruelty is this, to take away all bodily meat from a whole realm, because a few fools are inclined to be gluttons, and do harm to themselves and other men, by this meat taken immoderately. As readily may a proud priest err against the Gospel written in Latin, as a simple layman may err against the Gospel written in English. \* \* \* But worldly clerks cry that Holy Writ in English, will put Christian men at strife, and subjects in rebellion against their sovereigns, and therefore it shall not be suffered among laymen. Alas! how may they more openly slander God, the author of peace, and his holy law, fully teaching meekness, patience, and charity.' MS. Harl. 6333, cited in Wycliffe's Bible. Pref. xv. This tract contains nothing in itself to enable us to determine its date; it may be taken as showing how Wycliffe had to fight his way *towards* his ultimate effort as a translator of the Bible.



process of thought, to the determination to secure a translation of the Bible itself into English. In every stage of his efforts, he had given evidence enough of his disregard of Church authority, as commonly viewed in his time, and also of his conviction that the plain teachings of Scripture, concerning which every intelligent and well-disposed man should be deemed a competent judge, are, in truth, the one ultimate authority to be acknowledged in matters of religion. In consonance with this maxim—always implied, if not expressed, even in his earliest writings, and to which each new discussion seemed to give greater clearness and certainty—he endeavoured, in this later period of his life, to give his countrymen a fuller expression of scripture truth in their own tongue; and with this more resolute purpose to make the people reformers through their own language, came the purpose to give them the entire Bible in that language.

Among Wycliffe's manuscript sermons, there is one in which he speaks of 'a great bishop of England' as being deeply incensed 'because *God's law is written in English to lewd men* (laymen).' The preacher adds 'He pursueth 'a certain priest, because *he writeth to men this English*, 'and summoneth him, and traveleth him, so that it is 'hard for him to bear it. And thus he pursueth another 'priest, by the help of Pharisees, (Monks and Friars) 'because he preacheth Christ's gospel freely, and without fables. Oh! men who are on Christ's behalf, help 'ye now against Antichrist, for the perilous times are



‘come which Christ and Paul foretold.’<sup>1</sup> Here the ‘great bishop’ alluded to, is evidently Courtney, and the two priests mentioned must have been Hereford and Ashton. The latter we have seen to have been an earnest disciple of Wycliffe, and zealous and effective as a preacher. But if we are correct in this interpretation—and the passage does not seem susceptible of any other—it is clear that even in the absence of any article to that effect in the charges urged against Hereford and Ashton in 1382, Wycliffe had the impression that the zeal of Courtney had been stimulated in the prosecutions of that year, from some knowledge, or suspicion, of an intention to put ‘*God’s law, written in English,*’ in the hands of the laity. It shows further, that *Wycliffe knew Hereford to have been engaged in this labour at that time.*

On this first question—the question as to when Wycliffe first became possessed with the idea of securing a translation of the Scriptures into English, we had hoped to derive some assistance from the labours of the learned editors of Wycliffe’s Bible; but to this point they have brought no new light. It is something, however, to find that researches so extended, and so carefully conducted, have tended to confirm our own view in this particular,

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<sup>1</sup> MS. Hom. Bib. Reg. British Museum. MS. Magd. Coll. Cambr. Pepys, 2616. p. 192. C. C. C. Cambr. cccxxxvi. p. 52. The above extract is from the first of these manuscripts, and first printed in the *Life and Opinions of Wycliffe*; the extract given in the *Wycliffe Bible* is from the manuscript in Magd. Coll. Cambr.

as given to the public before those researches were contemplated. Our impression then was, that the thought had certainly not been broached publicly by Wycliffe earlier than the year 1378; our present impression, as the result of further examination and reflection is, that the thought did not become a *purpose* earlier than the year in which the Reformer withdrew from Oxford—the year 1381. We shall see in another place, that many of his writings published after his retirement from Oxford contain allusions to this subject, while nothing definite on this point is found in any of his productions belonging clearly to an earlier period. When once his intention in this matter became known, his followers concurred in it so warmly, and his enemies began to look upon it with so much resentment, that the idea soon became notorious, and would no doubt have so become much sooner, had the announcement of it been sooner made.

On the second question—did Wycliffe live to see this great work completed—the evidence before us may be taken as decisive. In a well-known ‘Prologue,’ prefixed to some manuscripts of the English Bible, and which some suppose to have been written in 1395, but which others, on better evidence, regard as written in 1388, not four years subsequent to the death of Wycliffe, mention is distinctly made, of ‘the Bible of *late translated*,’ and reasons are assigned at large, for subjecting the translation so made, to a careful revision.

It will hardly be supposed that a less space than four

years would intervene between the completing of the first version, and the elaborate preparation of a second. It will be remembered, moreover, that the canon against translating the 'text of scripture into the English tongue,' which was adopted by the synod over which Archbishop Arundel presided, pointed expressly to 'the time of John Wycliffe,' as the time with which innovation in this shape was especially connected. Comparison of the various manuscripts of the translations made about this time, shows, beyond doubt, that there was an earlier and a later translation, each with characteristics of its own. If there be any difficulty here, it is in supposing that the first of these versions did not precede the second by more than four years, rather than within a less space. On the whole, both documents and tradition may be said to attest, with sufficient clearness, that the Reformer lived to see his wishes in this respect accomplished.

Concerning the manner in which this idea was realized, we cannot do better than avail ourselves of the statement given by the editors of the Wycliffe Bible, as now printed. Speaking of the various attempts of this nature which had preceded the effort of our Reformer, these gentlemen say—

'By the several productions which have been noticed, and probably by others of a like kind now lost, the way was prepared for a more complete and correct version of the Holy Scriptures. The New Testament was naturally the first object. The text of the gospels was ex-



‘ tracted from the commentary upon them by Wycliffe,  
‘ and to these were added the Epistles, the Acts and the  
‘ Apocalypse, all now translated anew. This translation  
‘ might probably be the work of Wycliffe himself; at  
‘ least the similarity of style between the Gospels and  
‘ the other parts, favours the supposition. Prologues  
‘ were prefixed to the several books, agreeing with those  
‘ commonly found in Latin manuscripts of the fourteenth  
‘ century. It seems questionable, whether the prologues  
‘ were translated by the same hand as the text: and if  
‘ they were added subsequently, it would account for the  
‘ circumstance of their being wanting in several of the  
‘ copies. Short verbal glosses are frequently introduced  
‘ into the text.

‘ Probably while the New Testament was in progress,  
‘ or within a short time of its completion, the Old Tes-  
‘ tament was taken in hand by one of Wycliffe’s coadju-  
‘ tors. The original copy of the translator is still extant  
‘ in the Bodleian Library. It is corrected throughout by  
‘ a contemporary hand. A second copy also in the  
‘ Bodleian Library, and transcribed from the former pre-  
‘ viously to its correction, has a note at the end, assigning  
‘ the translation to Nicholas de Hereford. This note was  
‘ evidently made not very long after the manuscript was  
‘ written; and there need be no hesitation in giving full  
‘ credence to its statement. It is remarkable, that both  
‘ these copies end abruptly in the book of Baruch, break-  
‘ ing off in the middle of a sentence. It may thence be

‘inferred, that the writer was suddenly stopped in the  
 ‘execution of his work, nor is it unreasonable to conjecture  
 ‘further, that the cause of the interruption was the  
 ‘summons which Hereford received to appear before the  
 ‘synod in 1382. Soon after that event he left England,  
 ‘and was absent for some time. The translation itself  
 ‘affords proof, that it was completed by a different hand,  
 ‘and not improbably by Wycliffe himself. It comprises,  
 ‘besides the canonical books, all those commonly reckoned  
 ‘among the Apocryphal, except the fourth book of  
 ‘Esdras.

‘The prologues, in the Old Testament as in the New,  
 ‘are, for the most part, those usually found in the contemporary  
 ‘manuscripts of the Vulgate. The Old Testament has no  
 ‘marginal glosses, neither does it appear to have been the  
 ‘intention of Hereford to admit glosses into the text; those  
 ‘which occur in it previously to Baruch iii. 20, are the  
 ‘insertions of a second hand. Subsequently to this place  
 ‘textual glosses are frequent. The manuscripts of the  
 ‘Old Testament are remarkably uniform in the readings  
 ‘of the text.

‘The translation of the whole Bible being thus completed,  
 ‘the next care was to render it as extensively useful as  
 ‘possible. With this view, a table of the portions of  
 ‘Scripture read as the Epistles and Gospels of the Church  
 ‘Service on the Sundays, Feasts, and Fasts of the year,  
 ‘was framed. This table was inserted in certain copies  
 ‘of the newly-translated Bibles, and the

‘ passages were marked in the text by letters placed in the margin, over against the beginning and end of the several portions ; or sometimes the margin contained a rubric, stating at length the service for which the lesson was appointed. To some copies of the New Testament such portions of the Old were annexed, as were used in the Church Service instead of the Epistles. In order also to render those parts of Scripture in most frequent use accessible at less cost, books were written containing nothing more than the Gospels and Epistles read in the service of the Mass.’<sup>1</sup>

The note concerning ‘ Nicholas de Hereford,’ in the manuscript mentioned, did not escape the research of Mr. Baber. It will be seen, that this piece of information, together with the above suggestion, as to the probable cause of the abrupt termination of the labour of the translator, are matters of evidence strictly in accordance with the allusion made by Wycliffe to the proceedings against Hereford, in the homily before cited.

Of course, the translation thus completed, was made simply from the Latin into English. But made in so short a space of time, by different hands, and in such unfavourable circumstances, it will not be supposed to have been faultless. ‘ The part translated by Hereford,’ it is said,<sup>2</sup> ‘ differed in style from the rest ; it was extremely literal, occasionally obscure, and sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Wycliffe’s Bible, Pref. xx.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



‘incorrect ; and there were other blemishes throughout, ‘incident to a first essay of this magnitude.’ It is not surprising, therefore, that a revised version should have been soon contemplated ; and it is certain that a few years after the death of Wycliffe—probably not more than four years—this work also was accomplished. Though it did not make its appearance during the lifetime of the Reformer, it is by no means improbable that this later version owed its existence to his suggestion and encouragement. We are assured by those who have a right to speak with authority on this subject, that the two translations are distinguished from each other by marks which place the earlier date of the one, and the later date of the other, beyond all reasonable doubt.

But so little have these differences been attended to, that it now appears, that the New Testament printed by Mr. Lewis a century since, and reprinted by Mr. Baber in our own time, does not give us the earlier translation made by Wycliffe, but the revised translation, subsequently set forth by one of his followers. The evidence to this effect is so decisive, that there is not likely to be any controversy in relation to it among persons entitled to have an opinion on the subject. ‘Dr. Waterland,’ it is said, ‘who greatly assisted Lewis in obtaining information for his history of the English translations of the ‘Bible, was at first induced to think that both versions ‘were the work of Wycliffe ; but afterwards concluded ‘that the later version, and the general prologue, were

‘by John Purvey. Unfortunately, having but little  
 ‘leisure for the investigation, he was induced by a com-  
 ‘parison of the style and language of the versions, to  
 ‘take for the earlier of the two that which was in fact  
 ‘the later. Lewis adopted the opinions of Dr. Waterland,  
 ‘and interweaving in his narrative the information sup-  
 ‘plied to him, much as it came to his hands, has com-  
 ‘piled an account, which is not only confused, but  
 ‘sometimes inconsistent with itself. Mr. Baber, when  
 ‘he reprinted Lewis’s edition of the New Testament,  
 ‘repeated this mistake.’<sup>1</sup> This mistake is the less excu-  
 sable, as Henry Wharton had truly determined the re-  
 spective characters and dates of the two versions, rightly  
 assigning the earlier to Wycliffe, and the later to the  
 author of the General Prologue.<sup>2</sup>

But to whom should this later and revised version, and  
 this Prologue introducing it, be attributed? We see that  
 Dr. Waterland, in what may be called the middle stage  
 of his investigation on this point, ascribed both the Pro-  
 logue and the later version to John Purvey,—a clergy-  
 man who had officiated as a curate with Wycliffe, at Lut-  
 terworth. The editors of the Wycliffe Bible adopt this  
 opinion, and have reasoned at considerable length in sup-  
 port of it. On some points the evidence adduced does not

<sup>1</sup> Wycliffe’s Bible, Pref. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Harmer’s (Henry Wharton’s) *Specimens of Errors in the History of the Reformation*. *Auctarium Historiæ Dogmaticæ*, J. Usserii, 424, et seq.

appear to us as decisive or forcible; but, on the whole, we know not another man among the followers of Wycliffe, who may be regarded with so much probability, as having been the chief agent in this honorable service.<sup>1</sup> The volumes issued by the Oxford University press, give the two versions, column by column on the same page, and describe the whole as ‘the earliest English versions, made ‘from the Latin Vulgate, by John Wycliffe and his followers.’

<sup>1</sup> Purvey lived with Wycliffe in the latter years of his life, and after the death of the Reformer we find him preaching at Bristol. (Knighton, 2660.) In 1387, a mandate from the bishop forbids his preaching again in that diocese. Among the erroneous or heretical books, condemned by the bishops of Worcester, Salisbury, and Hereford, in 1388 and 1389, we find those of Purvey. Bale states, (541) that while in prison in 1390, he wrote a Commentary on the Apocalypse, compiled from the lectures delivered by Wycliffe. From a notice of his writings in Foxe, under the year 1396, he must at that time have been an author of much celebrity. In 1400, the storm became so formidable, that he was induced to read a recantation at St. Paul’s Cross. (Wilkins’ Concilia. iii. 260.) In the following year he was admitted, on the presentation of the Archdeacon of Canterbury, to the vicarage of Westthithe, in Kent, which he resigned in 1403, (Reg. Arundel, 278—290.) He is said to have been a second time imprisoned under Archbishop Chicheley, in 1421. (Bale’s Notes in Fascic. Zizaniorum MS. Bodleian e Mus. 86. Foxe, Acts and Mon.) There is evidence that he was alive as late as 1427. Walden speaks of him as a follower of Wycliffe, *magnus autoritate, doctor eximius*, and quotes his book, *De compendiis scripturarum, paternarum, doctrinarum et canonicum*; and farther states that he himself had a copy of this work, taken from Purvey, when he was put in prison. (Doctrinale, Tom. i. 619, 637.)

It is not difficult to suppose, that such a man should have been the author of the Prologue prefixed to the translation of the Bible completed in 1388, and the person chiefly concerned in the translation itself. Wycliffe’s Bible, Pref. xxiv. xxv. Lewis’ Life of Wiclif, 246.



There are deeds which stand for more than they seem ; which include more than they articulate ; which perform more than they promise. In ideas, as in substances, there are appearances which give little to the eye, but which, ere long, give largely to experience. Men work for ages with these ideas—these elements of things—without suspecting that they contain all that is in them. Great principles are born slowly—advance slowly and do their ultimate work, like the master-forces in nature, as much without hurry as without noise. The men who gave the English Bible to our forefathers, lodged a fact in our history pregnant with such principles. It was a fact which supposed the Sufficiency of Scripture, and the Right of Private Judgment—fixing the Ultimate Authority concerning Religion, in the Individual and the Bible, not in the Church and her Traditions. Of these principles the translators of our first English Bible saw something—enough to stimulate them in their labours, and to sustain them under the sufferings to which those labours exposed them. But they no more saw all that was involved in what they did, than our ancestors saw all that was included in the provisions of Magna Charta. In both cases, the chief actors knew only in part, and therefore prophesied only in part. But the more to their honor, if with a forecast so limited, they could do and dare so largely. It was the aim of Wycliffe and his followers, in this memorable achievement, to take man out of the hands of the priest, and to place his religion in the

personal—in his personal responsibility, intelligence, and right feeling. In this they became Englishmen of their own order. Men like them had not gone before them. The thought was born with them—born never to die.



## CHAPTER XI.

### WYCLIFFE AS A PARISH PRIEST.



IN 1367, Urban the fifth, overcome, it is said, by the entreaties of the Romans, removed the papal court from Avignon to Rome. But in 1370, the pontiff returned to Avignon, that his good offices might be the more effectual in negotiating a peace between the kings of France and England. In that year, however, Urban died. He was succeeded by a Frenchman of noble birth, who took the title of Gregory the eleventh.

This Gregory is the Pope who, in 1378, sent his letters to Oxford, to the English prelates, and to the English monarch, requiring that inquisition should be made without delay, concerning the opinions said to have been promulgated by John Wycliffe, and others, at that time. Urban was, on the whole, a pope of the better class. Gregory was a man of little virtue. But he



possessed audacity and energy in a high degree. The exigences of his position, however, were great—too great to be surmounted by his means and capacities. In his time, the enemies of the papal power in Italy were strong and unscrupulous, especially the Florentines. The incursions made on the domains of the church, disposed the new pontiff to remove the papal court once more to Rome. Some pretext in favour of this step was found in the visions of a supposed prophetess, who appeared at Avignon, calling upon the successor of St. Peter to return to his own city. Judging from the event, the inspiration in this case must have been of a doubtful origin. The pontiff was obedient, but his children, even in Italy, proved to be stubbornly rebellious. The pontifical office, from long absence, had ceased to be an object of reverence. In 1378, Gregory was meditating an escape from the mortifications and insults which seemed everywhere to await him, by returning to Avignon, when death put an end to the cares of his greatness. The year of this event, it will be remembered, was that in which Wycliffe appeared before the papal commissioners at Lambeth, when he presented his written explanations on the eighteen ‘conclusions’ said to have been published by him.

In the memorable event which followed upon the death of Gregory, we may see in part the cause of the delay as to further proceedings against Wycliffe at that time ; and the cause also, in a great degree, of the caution,

and apparent timidity of the enemies of the Reformer, on subsequent occasions. It was natural, moreover, that the event which was of a nature to suggest prudence on the one side, should have served to stimulate to greater boldness on the other.

‘After the death of Gregory the eleventh,’ says Mosheim, ‘The cardinals being assembled to provide a successor, the Roman people, fearing lest a Frenchman should be elected, who would remove to Avignon, demanded, with furious clamours and threats, that an Italian should be placed at the head of the church without delay. The terrified cardinals proclaimed Bartholomew de Pregnano, who was a Neapolitan by birth, and archbishop of Bari, to be elected pontiff, and he assumed the name of Urban VI. This new pontiff, by his coarse manners, his injudicious severity, and his intolerable haughtiness, alienated the minds of all from him, but especially the cardinals. These therefore withdrew to Fondi, a city in the kingdom of Naples, and there created another pontiff, Robert, count of Geneva, who took the title of Clement the seventh—alleging that Urban had been elected only in pretence, in order to quiet the rage of the Roman people. Which of these was the legitimate pontiff still remains uncertain, nor can it be fully ascertained from the records and documents which have been published in great abundance by both parties. Urban continued at Rome, Clement removed to Avignon in France. The cause of Clement was espoused

‘ by France, Spain, Scotland, Sicily, and Cyprus, the  
‘ other countries of Europe acknowledged Urban for the  
‘ true vicegerent of Christ.

‘ Thus the unity of the Latin church, as existing  
‘ under one head, came to an end at the death of Gregory  
‘ the eleventh, and that most unhappy disunion ensued  
‘ which is usually denominated the great schism of the  
‘ West. For, during fifty years, the Church had two or  
‘ three heads, and the contemporary pontiffs assailed each  
‘ other with excommunications, maledictions, and plots.  
‘ The calamities and distresses of those times are indes-  
‘ cribable. For besides the perpetual contentions and  
‘ wars between the pontifical factions, which were ruin-  
‘ ous to great numbers, involving them in the loss of life  
‘ or property, nearly all sense of religion was in many  
‘ places extinguished, and wickedness daily acquired  
‘ greater impunity and boldness ; the clergy, previously  
‘ corrupt, now laid aside the appearance of piety and  
‘ godliness, while those who called themselves Christ’s  
‘ vicegerents were at open war with each other ; and the  
‘ conscientious people, who believed no one would be  
‘ saved without living in subjection to Christ’s vicar,  
‘ were thrown into the greatest perplexity and anxiety  
‘ of mind.

‘ Yet both the church and the state reaped very  
‘ considerable advantages from these great calamities.  
‘ For the sinews of the pontifical power were severed  
‘ by these dissensions, and could not afterwards be



‘restored; and kings and princes, who had before been  
‘in a sense the servants of the pontiffs, now became  
‘their judges and masters. Moreover, great numbers,  
‘possessing some measure of discernment, despised and  
‘disregarded their pontiffs who could fight for empire;  
‘and committing themselves and their salvation into the  
‘hands of God, concluded that the church and religion  
‘might exist and be safe without any visible head.’<sup>1</sup>

Now we may safely believe, that Wycliffe owed his escape from the vengeance of the clergy, very much to the distractions which this event brought along with it;—nor was the Reformer slow in perceiving the aid which it might be made to contribute toward his object. This complexion of ecclesiastical affairs dates, it must be borne in mind, from 1378, and continued, as above described, until long after the decease of Wycliffe. England sided with the Italian pontiff, at Rome—France and her allies gave their suffrage to the French pontiff, at Avignon. Such was the embroiled and enfeebled condition of the papacy during the last six years in the life of our Reformer.

One event connected with the early stage of this notorious schism is so characteristic of the superstition and fanaticism of the times, as to deserve mention in this place. The schism began in 1378; and in about four years from that time, the rival popes had discharged

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<sup>1</sup> Eccles. Hist. Cent. XIV. Part ii. c. 2.

their spiritual artillery against each other, and against their respective adherents, so freely, that no more ammunition of that description remained. But the spiritual having failed, it was resolved to try the carnal. Urban dispatched an instrument to Spencer, bishop of Norwich, empowering him to organize a military crusade against the pope at Avignon. That the means wherewith to realize this most apostolic undertaking might not be wanting, the bishop was authorized to grant to all who should join his standard, or who should contribute money towards his object, an indulgence as large as had ever been granted in furtherance of a crusade against the infidels. The bishop was further authorized to excommunicate, suspend, or interdict all persons, of whatsoever rank, who should attempt to obstruct the execution of his mission. Even the government had its reasons for giving sanction to the project—and strange were the results. But for the sinews of war, the bishop and his ecclesiastics had to depend on the sale of indulgences, and on such voluntary contributions as their preachings might suffice to obtain. No pains were spared, no scruple was felt, by those to whom the sale of these spiritual commodities was intrusted. By the payment of certain stipulated sums of money, sinners might be at once freed from guilt, and from all fear of future punishment. More than this, there was not a soul dear to them on earth, whose pardon might not be thus procured; nor one dear to them in purgatory, who might not be thus released.

Some of the orators employed on this occasion, assured their wondering auditory, that in virtue of the pope's instrument, and of the prayer of the preacher, the angels would descend at once from heaven, enter the regions of purgatory, and convey the soul so redeemed, to the bliss of heaven!<sup>1</sup> All this taking place in the name of the pope, under the direction of a bishop, and with the approval of the government, so affected the people, that the sale of these wares was extraordinary, and the sums of money obtained not less so. Nor was it the poor merely, who were thus seduced. Many ladies of rank were so ensnared by this device, as to be led to part with their wealth and jewels, almost without limit, to further so good a cause. More than thirty papal bulls reached this country, urging upon our prelates the most zealous prosecution of this object: and to secure the services of the Duke of Lancaster, it was advised that one portion of the force to be raised should be directed against Spain, and be under the command of that nobleman. Froissart assures us that the treasure collected by these expedients, was considered sufficient for both enterprizes; 'for happy 'were they who could now die, in order to obtain so 'noble an absolution!' But while indulgences might give money, it was money only, according to the same authority, that could give soldiers—for 'men at arms,' observes our shrewd chronicler, 'cannot live upon par-

<sup>1</sup> Knighton de Event. 2671.



‘dons, nor do they pay much attention to them, except  
‘at the point of death.’

The army thus raised disembarked at Calais, on the twenty-third of April, 1383. Some weeks were there spent in waiting for Sir William Beauchamp, who, according to an arrangement with the king, should have made his appearance in that place with some reinforcements. The non-appearance of Sir William, however, was no mystery to the bishop. Before embarking at Dover, Spencer had received a despatch from the king, countermanding the expedition. But our prelate-knight was not to be diverted from his course. He had concealed the document, and had presumed to act in violation of its instructions. The bishop now affected great surprise at this delay, grew restless, and proposed that an excursion should be made into Flanders—a country at that time subject to France. Sir Hugh Calverly, the only man, it would seem, who had engaged in this enterprize without relinquishing the guidance of his common sense, objected gravely to this proposal, insisting that the king's instructions requiring them to wait for Sir William Beauchamp, should not be violated, and that they were sworn before leaving England to restrict their hostilities to the adherents of Clement, the antipope, whereas the earl of Flanders and his subjects were believed to be good Urbanists. To these exceptions Spencer opposed a torrent of angry and contemptuous declamation. The experienced soldier was provoked ; but having taken care to place the responsibility

of the movement upon the right shoulders, professed himself willing to execute the instructions that should be given to him.

The town of Gravelines was the first assailed. It was inhabited principally by fishermen, with scarcely any means of defence, and was exposed to all the disadvantage of a surprise. The soldiers knew that they were expected to be scrupulously obedient to the commands of the bishop; and that other towns might be terrified into submission, they slaughtered the inhabitants with an atrocity so unsparing, that, according to Walsingham, not an infant remained alive. The earl of Flanders sent messengers to complain of this aggression; but the devout priest, replied with an oath, that Flanders was the ally of France, and that to state thus much was to give a sufficient explanation of what had been done. From Gravelines the crusaders proceeded to Dunkirk, where several hundred of the English, and nearly four thousand of the Flemings, are said to have perished. The capture of that town was soon followed by the possession of others,—the inhabitants hoping to protect themselves from the ferocity of the victors by the show of submission. Spencer, as will be supposed, was elated beyond measure by these triumphs. So much was this the case, that he boasted of his readiness to measure strength with the king of France and the duke of Burgundy, who had joined their forces, and were proceeding by slow marches to strip him of his spoil. On

their approach, the acquisitions of the bishop fell from his grasp with a rapidity equal to that with which they had been made. It was through much hazard that Spencer reached England, where the censures which awaited him were such, from all quarters, as must have been any thing but agreeable to a temper so choleric and so vain.<sup>1</sup>

We can imagine the feeling with which Wycliffe would regard the zeal of the clergy, and especially of the friars, as put forth to raise this armament; and the feeling, moreover, with which he would listen to the news of its 'manslayings,' and its disasters. But we are not left to imagination on this point. We may listen to the Reformer as he gives utterance to his thought and indignation in reference to these proceedings, in this same year 1383. 'Christ,' we hear him say, 'is the good shepherd, 'for he puts his own life for the saving of his sheep. 'But Antichrist is a wolf of ravening, for he ever 'does the reverse, putting many thousand lives for his 'own wretched life. By forsaking things which Christ 'has bid his priests forsake, he might end all this strife.

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<sup>1</sup> Walsingham Hist. 288—295. Froissart VI. 51—65. Foxe, Acts and Mon. I. 582, 583. Knighton 2671. Spencer was deprived of his temporalities on the ground of having concealed and violated the royal instructions. Walsingham, 307. The bishop's treasurer, also a clergyman, was put under arrest, and subjected to a heavy fine. Nor did certain of the knights engaged in the campaign escape without trouble. See Rymer, March 6 and May 14, 1384.



‘ *Why is he not a fiend, stained foul with homicide, who, though a priest, fights in such a cause? If man-slaying in others be odious to God, much more in priests, who should be the vicars of Christ. And I am certain, that neither the pope, nor all the men of his council, can produce a spark of reason to show that he should do so.*’<sup>1</sup>

In another of his discourses, addressed to his flock at Lutterworth, he makes us acquainted with the sort of arguments that were used in favour of these church-militant doings—arguments which had resounded probably from many a neighbouring pulpit within the last twelve-months. ‘ *Friars now say, that bishops can fight best of all men, and that it falleth most properly to them, since they be lords of all this world. Thus they say the Maccabees fought; and Christ bade his disciples sell their coats to buy them swords—and whereto, if not to fight? Thus friars make a great array, and stir up many men to fight. But Christ taught not his apostles to fight with a sword of iron, but with the sword of God’s word, which standeth in meekness of heart, and in the prudence of man’s tongue. And as Christ was the meekest of men, so he was most drawn from the world, and would not judge or divide a heritage among men, and yet he could have done that best.*’<sup>2</sup>

Such facts are said to deserve the attention ‘ *of these*

<sup>1</sup> MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

'two popes, when they *fight one with the other*. But they were occupied many years before in blasphemy, and in sinning against God and his church. And this made them to sin more, as an ambling blind horse, when he beginneth to stumble, continueth in his stumbling until he casts himself down.'<sup>1</sup>

Not content with frequent references of this description to the humbled condition of the papal power by reason of this dissension, the Reformer wrote a tract intitled '*The Schism of the Popes,*' in which he exposes, more at large, the evils of the ecclesiastical system, as evils which must find their natural issue in such strifes,—insisting, with much force and earnestness, that to expect the tree to bear better fruit until it shall itself be made better, must be vain. The change necessary to this end is said to be two-fold—the enormous wealth of the clergy and of the religious orders must be reduced; and, furthermore, the power of the keys, assumed by the priesthood, and which has made it possible for them to accumulate so much wealth, must be exposed as a fraud, and come to an end. Men must be taught to regard the service of the priest as being in all cases purely *ministerial*—that is, as being valid only as in accordance with the unalterable principles of morality, and with the will of God as revealed in the scriptures. In urging his countrymen to aspire to this religious freedom, he

<sup>1</sup> MS. Codd. Rec. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl.



writes, 'Trust we in the help of Christ on this point, 'for he hath begun already to help us graciously, in that 'he hath clove the head of Antichrist, and made the two 'parts fight against each other. For it is not to be doubted that the sin of the popes, which hath been so long 'continued, hath brought in this division.' Should the rival popes continue thus to strive against each other, or should one of them prevail, a serious wound, it is maintained, has been inflicted, and the time has come in which 'emperors and kings should help in this 'cause, to maintain God's law, to recover the heritage 'of the church, and to destroy the foul sins of clerks, 'saving their persons.' The notion that the suffrage of princes or of cardinals may raise an erring mortal to a state of infallibility, is treated as in every view absurd. On this point 'the children of the fiend should better 'learn their logic and philosophy, lest they prove themselves heretical by a false interpretation of the law of 'Christ.' Men ordained as priests are truly such but as they partake of a Christian spirit. Without qualifications of this spiritual nature, no form of episcopal appointment can be of any value. The necessity of confession to a priest, moreover, is a fiction of priesthood; and among heresies 'there is no greater, than for a man 'to believe that he is absolved from sin, if he give money, 'or because a priest layeth his hand on the head, and 'saith, I absolve thee—for thou must be sorrowful in thy 'heart, else God absolveth thee not.' So thorough were







Lutterworth Church in 1384.

the views of the Reformer subsequent to 1378 on this cardinal topic.<sup>1</sup>

In another of his productions the Reformer writes, 'Simon Magus never laboured more in the work of simony, than do these priests. And so God would no longer suffer the fiend to reign in only *one* such priest, but for the sin which they had done, made division among *two*, that *men now, in Christ's name, may the more easily overcome them both.*' Evil, like good, it is said, must be weakened by diffusion, 'and *this now moveth priests to speak heartily in this matter*, for when God will bless the Church, but men are slothful, and will not labour, then sloth is to be rebuked for many reasons.'<sup>2</sup>

In his vocation as a parish priest, Wycliffe appears to have acquitted himself with most exemplary fidelity and diligence. He became rector of Lutterworth in 1376, and was wholly resident in that place from the spring of 1381, until the time of his decease. During the first four years after his appointment to this living, he appears to have divided the year between Lutterworth and Oxford; subsequently, his only absence from Lutterworth would seem to have been, when summoned to appear before the convocation in Oxford, in the autumn of 1382. The manuscripts preserved to us containing his written pre-

<sup>1</sup> MS. Trinity College, Dublin, class c. tab. 3, No. 12, pp. 193—208.

<sup>2</sup> MS. of the Church and her Governance. Bib. Reg. xviii. 6, ix.



parations for the pulpit, or consisting of notes taken from his lips as a preacher, are very numerous. In some instances these remains consist of little more than brief observations, jotted down in connexion with our English translation of the lesson, or part of the lesson for the day ; in others they approach nearer to the length of a modern sermon. But when filling several closely written pages, we know not how far to regard them as exhibiting any thing beyond the spirit, or the general manner of the Reformer's efforts as a preacher. His known facility as a public instructor, and the fact that these fragments often resemble a mere specification of topics, rather than a regular discussion of them, preclude us from supposing that he restricted himself in such services to what he had written. Nor is it certain that the publication of these papers was his own act, or at all expected by him. They contain nothing inconsistent with the notion of their having been collected and transcribed after his decease ; and the character of Purvey, his curate, warrants us in supposing that care would be taken, at the time of his death, to preserve whatever had proceeded from his pen, or had been noted down from his free utterances to the people of his charge. But in whatever manner these compositions may have reached us, there is no room to doubt their authenticity. They contain many passages, which not only express the opinions of Wycliffe, but in which those opinions are expressed in the very terms employed by him in some of the unquestionable

productions of his pen. As will be supposed, these discourses are very simple and popular, both in their language and substance. Abstruse questions are sometimes touched upon, but they are soon dismissed, that attention may be given to 'things more profiting.' Much pains is taken to expose the delusions practised on the people by the priesthood. Confession, absolution, prayer to saints, and similar forms of error, are laid bare as such—and the preacher is unwearied in his effort to convince his hearers, that they will be found to be religious at last, not according to what may have been done *for* them by priests, but according as they shall be found to have so trusted to the sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of sin, as to become pure in life, and renewed in the spirit of their mind, through the influence of Christ's truth, taking with it the grace of the Holy Spirit.

With such views as to the nature of religion, it was natural that Wycliffe should attach great importance to the office of preaching. In the earlier ages of the Church, the maxims and example of our Lord and his apostles were too recent to be forgotten, and preaching long continued to be the great agency by which Christianity was sustained and diffused. But in the middle age, the mass-priest had come too much into the place of the Christian teacher. As this change came in, popular ignorance became more dark, popular superstition more gross. The enlightened Grossteste, bishop of Lincoln, so deplored this course of things, that in the hope of doing something to



counteract it, he became a zealous patron of the friars, in their professed capacity of *preaching* brethren. It is true, the good bishop lived to reject this remedy as being even worse than the disease. The power acquired by the new preachers, was such as to show what might be done by a wise use of the function they had assumed ; but, unhappily, in place of aiming to remove the ignorance, and to eradicate the superstitions of the people, the mendicants soon became intent on making these weaknesses subserve their own selfish passions. Wycliffe saw these evils more clearly than Grossteste, and deplored them more deeply. He censured the parochial clergy, whose neglect of their proper duties had prepared the way for the appearance of these new orders ; but his loudest denunciation was reserved for these orders themselves, whose practice, as preachers, exhibited, in his time, little else than the abuses of that function. The itinerant nature of the ministry exercised by them, could hardly have been displeasing to him, inasmuch as he often defended the same practice in his followers. It was their substituting ‘ fables—chronicles of the world—stories from the battle of Troy,’ and doctrines which were not merely foolish, but fraudulent, in the place of the Gospel, that filled him with so restless an abhorrence of these new-comers. In his view, they were the Pharisees of the age, great in outward seeming, while all beneath was foulness. But he never allows his views concerning the use of preaching, to be affected by this abuse of it. He



was himself eminent in the kind of learning which had assisted the mendicants in acquiring their reputation, and not less so in that power of oral teaching, which had been especially cultivated by them. With the erudition of the college, he united the severity of the cloister, and to these he added the simplicity and fervour indispensable to the success of the popular preacher. The age, it would seem, contained little of religious error which he did not see—and with which he was not prepared to grapple by the use of the fitting appliances. His zeal was not of the spurious description which concerns itself with the high, to the neglect of the humble; with speculations about the remote and the future, at the expense of duties imposed by the immediate and the present. His chair as a professor, and his pulpit as a village preacher, were significant of efforts alike congenial to him; and he was equally in his place, whether negotiating with the papal envoys at Bruges, lecturing at Oxford, or ministering the consolations of religion in the lowest hovels of the poor in Ludgershall or Lutterworth.

Among the earlier writings of the Reformer is an Exposition of the Decalogue, in which he enjoins on the Christian man, that having attended with becoming seriousness to the worship prescribed for the Sunday, he should ‘visit those who are sick, or who are in trouble, especially those whom God hath made needy by age, or by other sicknesses; as the feeble, the blind, and the lame, who are in poverty. These thou shalt relieve

‘with thy goods, after thy power, and after their need, ‘for thus biddeth the Gospel.’ It is fair to presume, that the preacher who urged attention to such duties thus feelingly upon his hearers, was not himself unmindful of such obligations. ‘True charity,’ he writes, ‘beginneth at the love of man’s spirit,’ and one of his maxims was, that ‘men who love not the souls, love little the bodies of their neighbours.’

Emphatic, too, is the language in which he insists on preaching, as among the first duties of the priest. Hence he denounces the priests who were found ‘in taverns, and ‘hunting, and playing at their tables, instead of learning God’s law, and preaching,’ as ‘foul traitors;’—and this because, ‘most of all is the preaching of the Gospel, ‘for this Christ enjoined on his disciples more than any ‘other; by this he conquered the world out of the fiend’s ‘hand: and whosoever he be that can bring priests ‘to act thus, hath authority from God, and merit in his ‘deed.’ Inasmuch as the influence of Wycliffe’s ‘poor priests’ resulted from their zeal and ability as preachers, it may not be unacceptable to the reader, if we allow the Reformer to give utterance to his thoughts on this subject, with something of the fulness wherewith he was wont to discourse upon it to the men of his time.

I. ‘*The highest service to which man may attain on earth, is to preach the word of God.* This service falls ‘peculiarly to priests, and therefore God more straightly ‘demands it of them. Hereby should they produce chil-



‘dren to God, and this is the end for which God has  
‘wedded the Church. Surely it might be good to have  
‘a son that were lord of this world, but fairer much it  
‘were to have a son in God, who, as a member of holy  
‘Church, shall ascend to heaven. And for this cause  
‘Jesus Christ *left other works, and occupied himself mostly*  
‘*in preaching, and thus did his apostles, and for this God*  
‘*loved them.* II. Further—*he also does best, who best keeps*  
‘*the commandments of God.* Now the first command-  
‘ment of the second table bids us honour our elders, as  
‘our father and mother. But this honour should be first  
‘given to holy Church, for she is the mother we should  
‘most love, and for her, as our faith teaches, Christ  
‘died. The Church, however, is honoured most by the  
‘preaching of God’s word; and hence, this is the best  
‘service that priests may render unto God. Thus a  
‘woman said to Christ, that the womb that bare him,  
‘and the breasts which he had sucked, should be blessed  
‘of God; but Christ said, rather should that man be  
‘blessed who should hear the words of God, and keep  
‘them. And this should preachers do more than other  
‘men, and this word should they keep more than any  
‘other treasure. Idleness in this office is to the Church  
‘its greatest injury, producing most the children of the  
‘fiend, and sending them to his court. III. Further—  
‘*that service is the best which hath the worst opposed to it.*  
‘But the opposite of preaching is of all things the  
‘worst—preaching, therefore, if it be well done, is the



‘ best of all. Accordingly, Jesus Christ, when he ascended  
‘ into heaven, commanded it especially to all his apostles,  
‘ to go and preach the gospel freely to every man. So  
‘ also when Christ spoke last with Peter, he bade him  
‘ thrice, as he loved him, to feed his sheep ; and this a  
‘ wise shepherd would not have done, if he had not him-  
‘ self loved it well. In this stands the office of the  
‘ spiritual Shepherd. As the bishop of the temple hin-  
‘ dered Christ, so is He hindered now, by the hindering  
‘ of this deed. Therefore Christ told them, that at the  
‘ day of doom, Sodom and Gomorrah should better fare  
‘ than they. And thus, if our bishops preach not in their  
‘ own persons, and hinder true priests from preaching,  
‘ they are in the sin of the bishops who killed the Lord  
‘ Jesus Christ ! ’<sup>1</sup>

Men who could expect more from the ignorance of the people than from their knowledge, and who in consequence would fain substitute the altar and the priest, for the pulpit and the preacher, listened with alarm to the utterance of such opinions, and became concerned to discover arguments wherewith to oppose them. The sort of argument put into requisition for this purpose, and the manner in which Wycliffe disposed of such objections, we learn from the writings of the Reformer. ‘ When true men teach, that by the law

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<sup>1</sup> MS. *Contra Fraters*, Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83, pp. 89, 20.



Lutterworth Church in 1384.





‘ of God, and wit, and reason, each priest is bound to  
‘ do his utmost to preach the gospel of Christ, the fiend  
‘ beguileth hypocrites to excuse him from this service,  
‘ by teaching a feigned contemplative life, and by urging  
‘ that since that is the best, and they may not do both,  
‘ *they are needed, by the love of God, to leave the preaching*  
‘ *of the Gospel, that they may live in contemplation.*

‘ But see now the hypocrisy and falsehood of this.  
‘ Our faith teaches us that since Christ was God, and  
‘ might not err, he taught and practised the best life for  
‘ priests. *But Christ preached the gospel, and charged his*  
‘ *apostles and disciples to go and preach the gospel to*  
‘ *all men.* The best life, then, for priests, must be to  
‘ teach and preach the gospel. God also teacheth in the  
‘ Old Law, that *the office of a priest is to shew the people*  
‘ *their sins.* But as each priest is a prophet, by his order,  
‘ according to St. Gregory on the Gospels, it is then the  
‘ office of every priest to preach, and to proclaim the  
‘ sins of the people. In this doing shall each priest  
‘ be as an angel of God, as holy writ saith. *Also Christ,*  
‘ *and John the Baptist, left the desert to preach the Gospel,*  
‘ *and preached it to their death.* To do this, therefore, is  
‘ the greatest charity, or else they were out of charity,  
‘ or at best imperfect in it,—and *that* may hardly be,  
‘ since the one was God; and, after Christ, no man has  
‘ been holier than the Baptist.

‘ The holy prophet Jeremiah, hallowed from his  
‘ mother’s womb, might not be excused from preach-

‘ing by his love of contemplation, but was charged  
‘of God to proclaim the sins of the people, and to  
‘suffer hard pain for so doing. So was it with all the  
‘prophets. Ah ! Lord, since Christ, and John, and all  
‘the prophets, were compelled by charity to come out of  
‘the desert to preach the gospel, and for this to leave  
‘their solitary prayers—how dare these heretics to say  
‘that it is better to be still, and to pray over their own  
‘feigned ordinances, than to preach the gospel of Christ !  
‘Lord, what accursed spirit of falsehood moveth priests  
‘to shut themselves within stone walls all their life,  
‘while Christ gave command to all his apostles and  
‘priests to go into all the world, and to preach the  
‘gospel ! Surely they are open fools, and do plainly  
‘against the gospel ; and, if they continue in this error,  
‘are accursed of God, as perilous deceivers and heretics.

‘For in the first part of the pope’s law it is said, that  
‘each man who cometh to the priesthood, taketh on  
‘him the office of a beadle, to go before doomsday,  
‘and to cry to the people their sins, and the vengeance  
‘of God ; and since men are holden heretics who do  
‘against the pope’s law, are not those priests heretics  
‘who refuse to preach the gospel, and compel true men  
‘to leave the preaching of it. All law opposed to this  
‘service, is opposed to God’s law, and to reason and  
‘charity, and is for the maintenance of pride and covet-  
‘ousness in Antichrist’s clerks.’

‘Prayer is good, ‘says the Reformer,’ but not so good

‘as preaching: and, accordingly, in preaching, and also  
‘in praying, in the giving of sacraments, and the learn-  
‘ing of God’s law, and the rendering of a good example  
‘by purity of life, in these should stand the life of a  
‘priest.’<sup>1</sup>

Nor was it enough that the Reformer should plead for preaching in greater quantity,—he claimed that it should be also of better quality. His demand was for preaching that should be of the right substance, and after the best manner. In his time, two methods of preaching were prevalent: the one was called ‘declaring,’—the other, ‘postillating.’ To ‘declare,’ was to deliver an essay or oration upon a topic, rather than a sermon upon a text. To ‘postillate,’ was to read a portion of Scripture, and then to explain and apply its meaning, sometimes presenting the meaning of the passage more generally, sometimes expounding it clause by clause. We scarcely need say that Wycliffe’s preference was strongly on the side of postillating. In that method the Scriptures were the perceptible foundation of the discourse, and the mind, both of the preacher and of the auditory, was kept in wholesome relation to it.

To see the Reformer as he acquits himself in the discharge of his duties as a parish-priest, the reader may imagine himself in the old town of Lutterworth, as

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<sup>1</sup> MS. Of Feigned Contemplative Life. Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. tab. 3. No. 12.



it stretches along the top of that meadow slope above the river Swift, in the fourteenth century. It is not a large place. Its population does not exceed that of a considerable village. As you pace its three or four narrow and irregular streets, you find its thatched dwellings, with their wood and plaster walls, in no very attractive condition. Their first floor, for the most part, is not only unboarded, but unpaved, consisting of the trodden surface of the hill-side. Where the doors are open, the interior is all visible, and the wood fire, from the side or centre of the room, sends its smoke through door or window into the open air. It is so, even in that larger building, the ancient hospital near the bridge at the bottom of the hill, and in the few structures elsewhere which rise somewhat above the level of the cottage homes of the poor. You walk in those streets during certain hours of the forenoon, at almost any time through some years preceding the last month of 1384, and if tradition may be credited, you see a venerable man, with a long robe and flowing beard, having rude sandals on his feet, a plain belt about his waist, and a tall white staff in his hand, passing from street to street. All who meet him give him tokens of reverence. He acknowledges such wayside courtesies, and with one and another exchanges a few words of neighbourly greeting or inquiry. In every house where he would enter, he finds a simple and honest welcome. If sickness or sorrow be there, he takes his place beside the sufferer, as one who has his word in season to

offer, and his oil to pour, in good Samaritan fashion, into the throbbing wound. In the earlier hours of the morning on which you see him thus employed, this remarkable person has been engaged in revising and extending the later sections of a Latin treatise, the substance of which he had delivered as lectures to a crowded class-room when professor in Oxford; or, perhaps, before leaving the rectory on that morning, he has just completed the translation of a considerable portion of the Bible into English for the use of English people; or has issued an English tractate on the ecclesiastical corruptions of the times, that will be speedily transcribed and circulated from one end of the kingdom to the other. On the Sunday you see this man in the pulpit of the old town church, with the faces thus familiar to him in their own homes gathered as a flock about him, listening with deep interest to his bold utterances in defence of Christ's Gospel, of man's rights, and against all tyranny—especially the tyranny of those 'satraps' of the age, the ruling churchmen, who would suppress the truth of Christ, to serve their own selfish ends. The bishop of Lincoln—bishop of the diocese—is not ignorant of what is thus taking place from one Sunday to another in Lutterworth church. The district is vehemently suspected of heresy. The bishop has issued many hints—some grave admonitions. But the times are out of joint. It is not deemed wise to proceed further. So the rector takes his own course, and indoctrinates his flock after his own manner.



Such was Wycliffe, as the parish priest in Lutterworth ; and a few extracts from the sermons delivered by him there, and in such circumstances, will not, we trust, be unacceptable to the reader. It is in the following terms that he addresses himself to his parishioners concerning the duty of the clergy to extend their services as preachers to the ignorant, in the hamlets and less-peopled districts of the country. ‘The gospel telleth us the duty which  
‘ falls to all the disciples of Christ, and also how priests,  
‘ both high and low, should occupy themselves in the  
‘ church of God, and in serving him. And *first*, Jesus  
‘ himself did indeed the lessons he taught. The gospel  
‘ relates how he went about in the places of the country,  
‘ both great and small, in cities and castles, or in small  
‘ towns, and this that he might teach us how to become  
‘ profitable to men generally, and *not to forbear to preach*  
‘ *to a people because they are few, and our name may not*  
‘ *in consequence be great*. For we should labour for God,  
‘ and from Him hope for our reward. There is no doubt  
‘ that Christ went into small uplandish towns, as to  
‘ Bethphage, and Cana in Galilee—for Christ went to  
‘ all those places where he wished to do good. He  
‘ laboured not for gain—he was not smitten with either  
‘ pride or covetousness.’<sup>1</sup> The preacher laments, accordingly, that the jurisdiction of the prelates had become such as to empower them to prevent true priests from

<sup>1</sup> MS. Homilies, British Museum, Bib. Reg. xviii. 6; ix. 134.



giving themselves to such labours. While the Jewish priests suffered Jesus and the apostles to preach in their synagogues, the pretended successors of the apostles allow no such liberty to the servants of the master who was so privileged. But, if the Reformer's 'poor priests' were often refused access to the pulpits of their brethren, there were other ways in which their influence might be put forth with good effect. 'It was ever the manner of 'Jesus' says Wycliffe, 'to speak the words of God where-  
'ever he knew they might be profitable to those who  
'heard them. Hence Christ often preached, now at  
'meat, now at supper, and indeed at whatever time it  
'was convenient for others to hear him.'<sup>1</sup>

Wycliffe's 'poor priests' did much by this sort of household ministry. Many an incursion of this kind we can suppose to have been made, both by the Reformer, and by his zealous curate, Purvey, beyond the boundaries of the parish of Lutterworth.

In expounding the Epistle read on the third Sunday after advent, the preacher proceeds thus:—'*Let a  
'man so guess of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and as  
'dispensers of his services. If in this matter each man  
'should be found true, priests, both high and low, should  
'be found more true. But most foul is the failure and  
'the sin of priests in regard to this ministry. As if  
'ashamed to appear as the servants of Christ, the pope*

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<sup>1</sup> MS. Homilies, British Museum, Bib. Reg. xviii. 134—169.

‘ and his bishops show the life of emperors, and of the  
‘ lordly of this world, not the living of Christ. But since  
‘ Christ hated such things, they give us no room to guess  
‘ them to be the ministers of Christ. And so they fail  
‘ in the first lesson which Paul teacheth in this scripture.  
‘ Lord ! what good doth the talk of the pope, who must be  
‘ called of men “ most blessed father,” and bishops “ most  
‘ reverend men,” while their life is discordant to that of  
‘ Christ. In so taking these names, they shew that they  
‘ are on the fiend’s side, and children of the father of  
‘ falsehood. The pope may say, after St. Gregory, that  
‘ he is the servant of the servants of God, but his life  
‘ reverseth his name. For he faileth to follow Christ,  
‘ and is not the dispenser of the services which God hath  
‘ bidden, but departeth from this service to that lord-  
‘ ship which emperors have bestowed. And thus all the  
‘ services of the church which Christ hath appointed  
‘ to his priests, are turned aside, so that if men will  
‘ only take heed to that service which Christ hath thus  
‘ limited, it will be seen that all has been turned upside  
‘ down—hypocrites have become rulers.’<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the authority of the clergy as exercised in pronouncing judgment on the conduct of real or supposed ecclesiastical offenders, the preacher expresses himself in this same discourse in terms of great clearness and bravery. Paul has said, that in his case it

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<sup>1</sup> MS. Homilies, British Museum, Bib. Reg. xviii. 134—169.



was “a small thing to be judged of man’s judgment ;” on which Wycliffe remarks,—‘Men should not suppose themselves injured by the blind judgment of men, since God will judge all things, whether good or evil. Paul therefore taketh little heed to the judgment that man judgeth, for he knew well, from the scriptures, that *if God judgeth thus, then man’s judgment must stand, and not else.* Thus there are two days of judgment, *the day of the Lord, and man’s day.* The day of the Lord is the day of doom, when he shall judge all manner of men ; the day of man is now present, when man judgeth, and by the law of man. Every present judgment will be reversed, if it aught reverseth reason. At the day of doom, all shall stand according to the judgment of God. That is the day of the Lord, because then all shall be as he will, and nothing shall reverse his judgment ; and St. Paul therefore saith, ‘Judge nothing before the time, until the time of the Lord come, the which shall light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make known the counsels of the heart ;—*And this moveth many men to think day and night upon the law of God, for that leadeth to a knowledge of what is God’s will, and without a knowledge of this should man do nothing, and this also moveth men to forsake the judgment of man.* To St. Paul, the truth of holy writ, which is the will of the first judge, was enough until doomsday. *Stewards of the Church, therefore, should not judge merely according to their own will but always ac-*



‘ cording to the law of God, and in things of which  
‘ they are certain. But the laws and judgments which  
‘ Antichrist hath brought in, and added to the law of God,  
‘ mar too much the church of Christ. For with the stew-  
‘ ard rulers of the church, the laws of Antichrist are the  
‘ rules by which they make officers therein; and to  
‘ deceive the laity, Antichrist challengeth to be, in such  
‘ things, fully God’s fellow; for he affirmeth that, *if he*  
‘ *judgeth thus, his will should be taken for reason; whereas*  
‘ *this is the highest point that falleth to the Godhead.* Popes  
‘ and kings, therefore, should seek a reason *above their*  
‘ *own will*, for such blasphemy often bringeth to men  
‘ more than the pride of Lucifer. He said, he would  
‘ ascend, and be *like* the Most High, but he challenged  
‘ not to be the *fellow* of God, *even with him, or passing*  
‘ *him!* *May God bring down this pride, and help, that his*  
‘ *word may reverse that of the fiend!* Well indeed, I  
‘ know, that *when it is at the highest, this smoke shall*  
‘ *disappear.*’<sup>1</sup> The advice of the preacher in conclusion,  
is, that his hearers should study the will of God, and  
thus learn to cherish an independence of the judgments  
pronounced upon them by “popes or prelates,” inas-  
much as such verdicts “stretch not to doomsday;”—the  
period, when the will of God shall be found to be su-  
preme and unalterable.

One more extract must be sufficient, in illustration of

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<sup>1</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg.

the manner in which the Reformer was accustomed to notice the disorders of the hierarchy from the pulpit. 'Freedom' it is remarked, 'is much coveted, as men know by nature, but much more should Christian men covet the better freedom of Christ. It is known, however, that *Antichrist hath enthralled the church more than it was under the old law, though then the service was not to be borne.* New laws are now made by Antichrist, and such are not founded on the laws of the Saviour. More ceremonies, too, are now brought in than were in the old law, and *more do they tarry men in coming to heaven, than did the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees.* One cord of this thralldom, is the lordship claimed by Antichrist, as being full lord both of spirituals and temporals. Thus he turneth Christian men aside from serving Christ in Christian freedom; so much so, that they might well say, as the poet saith in his fable the frogs said to the harrow,—*'Cursed be so many masters.'* For in this day, Christian men are oppressed, now with popes, and now with bishops; now with cardinals under popes, and now with prelates under bishops; and now their head is assailed with censures,—in short, buffeted are they as men would serve a football. *But certainly, if the Baptist were not worthy to loose the latchet of the shoe of Christ, Antichrist hath no power thus to impede the freedom which Christ hath bought.* Christ gave this freedom to men that they might come to the bliss of heaven *with less difficulty*: but Antichrist

‘burdens them, that may give him money. Foul, therefore is this doing, with respect both to God and his law. Ever also do these hypocrites dread *lest God’s law should be shown, and they should thus be convicted of their falsehood.* For God and his law are most powerful; and for a time only, may these deceivers hold men in the *thralldom of Satan.*”<sup>1</sup>

But while these, and similar evils, were often dwelt upon in the sermons of the Reformer, and always in this intrepid temper, the flock committed to his care, as rector of Lutterworth, was far from being unaccustomed to the sound of themes more devotional in their character, and less connected with the passions too commonly excited by controversy. We next select a passage from a sermon preached by him on a Christmas-day, and upon the passage in Isaiah beginning with the words “Unto us a child is born.” ‘On this day we may affirm that a child is born to us, since Jesus, according to our belief, was this day born. Both in figure, and in letter, God spake of old to this intent, that to us a child should be born in whom we should have joy. From this speech of Isaiah, three short lessons are to be delivered, that men may rejoice in the after-services of this child. *First*, we hold it as a part of our faith, that as our first parents had sinned, there must be *atonement* made for it, according to the righteousness of God. For as God is

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<sup>1</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg.



‘merciful, so he is full of righteousness. But except he  
‘keep his righteousness on this point, how may he judge  
‘all the world? There is no sin done but what is against  
‘God, but this sin was done directly against the Lord  
‘Almighty, and Allrightful. The greater also the Lord  
‘is, against whom any sin is done, the greater always is  
‘the sin,—just as to do against the king’s bidding is  
‘deemed the greatest of offences. But the sin which is  
‘done against God’s bidding is greater without measure.  
‘God then, according to our belief, bid Adam that he  
‘should not eat of the apple. Yet he broke God’s com-  
‘mand. Nor was he to be excused therein by his own  
‘weakness, by Eve, nor by the serpent. Hence, accor-  
‘ding to the righteousness of God, this sin must always  
‘be punished. *It is to speak lightly, to say that God*  
‘*might, of his mere power, forgive this sin, without the*  
‘*atonement which was made for it, since the justice of*  
‘*God would not suffer this, which requires that every tres-*  
‘*pass be punished, either in earth or in hell.* God may  
‘not accept a person, to forgive him his sin without an  
‘atonement, *else he must give free licence to sin, both in*  
‘*angels and men, and then sin were no sin, and our God*  
‘*were no God!*

‘Such is the first lesson we take as a part of our faith;  
‘the *Second* is, that the person who may make atonement  
‘for the sin of our first father, must *needs be God and*  
‘*man.* For as man’s nature trespassed, so must man’s  
‘nature render atonement. An *angel*, therefore, would

‘ attempt in vain to make atonement for man, for he has  
‘ not the power to do it, *nor was his the nature that here*  
‘ *sinned*. But since all men form one person, if any  
‘ member of this person maketh atonement, the whole  
‘ person maketh it. But we may see that if God made  
‘ a man of nought, or strictly anew, after the manner of  
‘ Adam, *yet he were bound to God, to the extent of his*  
‘ *power for himself, having nothing wherewith to make*  
‘ *atonement for his own, or for Adam’s sin*. Since, then,  
‘ atonement *must* be made for the sin of Adam, as we  
‘ have shown,—the *person* to make the atonement must  
‘ be God and man, for *then the worthiness of this person’s*  
‘ *deeds, were even with the unworthiness of the sin*.’

From this necessity of an Atonement for sin, and of the Incarnation that it might be made, the conclusion said to follow is, as stated, that the child born must needs be God and man. The doctrine of the discourse is then viewed in its practical bearing. ‘ And we suppose,’ observes the preacher, ‘ that this child is only born *to the*  
‘ *men who follow him in his manner of life, for he was*  
‘ *born against others*. The men who are unjust and proud,  
‘ and who rebel against God, may read their judgment in  
‘ the person of Christ. By him, they must needs be con-  
‘ demned ; and most certainly, if they continue wicked to-  
‘ ward his Spirit to their death. And if we covet sincerely  
‘ that this Child may prove to be born *to us*, have we joy  
‘ of him, and follow we him in these three virtues, in  
‘ *righteousness, and meekness, and in patience for our*

‘*God.* For whoever shall be against Christ and his Spirit  
‘in these, unto his death, must needs be condemned of  
‘this Child, as others must needs be saved. And thus  
‘the joy professed in this Child, who was all meekness,  
‘and full of virtues, should make men to be children in  
‘malice, and then they would well keep this festival. To  
‘those who would indulge in strife, we would say, that  
‘the Child who is born is also Prince of Peace, and lov-  
‘eth peace, and contemneth men contrary to peace.  
‘Reflect we then how Christ came in the fulness of time,  
‘when he should ; and how he came in meekness, teach-  
‘ing us this at his birth ; and how he came in patience,  
‘suffering even from his birth unto his death ; and  
‘follow we him in these things, for the joy that we here  
‘have in him, and because this joy in the patience of  
‘Christ bringeth to joy that ever shall last.’<sup>1</sup>

The doctrines of Scripture with regard to the person of Christ, and to his sufferings viewed in relation to our redemption, are of frequent occurrence in these discourses. It was in the following manner that the Reformer generally spoke on the latter subject.

‘Men mark the passion of Christ, and print it on  
‘their heart, somewhat to follow it. It was the most  
‘*voluntary* passion that ever was suffered, and the most  
‘*painful*. It was most *voluntary*, and so most meritorious.  
‘Hence, when Christ went to Jerusalem, he foretold

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<sup>1</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg.



‘ the form of his passion to his disciples, and he who  
‘ before concealed himself to come to the city, came  
‘ now to his suffering, in a way to shew his free will.  
‘ Hence also he saith at the supper, ‘ *With desire have I*  
‘ *coveted to eat of this passover with you.*’ The desire of  
‘ his godhead, and the desire of his manhood, moved  
‘ him to eat thereof, and afterwards to suffer. But all  
‘ this was significant, and in figure of his last supper  
‘ which he eateth in heaven with the men whom he hath  
‘ chosen. And since Christ suffered thus cheerfully for  
‘ the sins of his brethren, they should suffer gratefully  
‘ for their own sins, and should purpose to forsake them.  
‘ This, indeed, is the cause why God would have the  
‘ passion of Christ rehearsed—the profit of the brethren  
‘ of Christ, and not his own.

‘ But the *pain* of Christ’s passion, passed all other  
‘ pain, for he was *the most tender of men, and in middle*  
‘ *age ; and God, by miracle, allowed his mind to suffer,* for  
‘ else, by his joy he might not have known sorrow. In  
‘ Christ’s passion, indeed, were all things which could  
‘ make his pain great, and so make it the more meri-  
‘ torious. The place was solemn, and the day also, and  
‘ the hour, the most so known to Jews, or heathen  
‘ men ; and the ingratitude and contempt were most ;  
‘ for men who should most have loved Christ, ordained  
‘ the foulest death, in return for his deepest kindness !  
‘ We should also believe, that Christ suffered not in any  
‘ manner but for some certain reason ; for he is both

‘ God and man, who made all things in their number,  
‘ and so would frame his passion to answer to the great-  
‘ ness of man’s sin. Follow we then after Christ in his  
‘ blessed passion, and keep we ourselves from sin here-  
‘ after, and gather we a devout mind from him.’ <sup>1</sup>

The reader will bear in mind, that these devotional instructions were prepared for the usual auditory of a parish church in the fourteenth century. The following passages were intended by the preacher, to explain the only sense in which he could admit that men might be said to ‘*deserve*’ the felicities of heaven.

‘ We should know that faith is a *gift* of God, and that  
‘ it may not be given to men except it be *graciously*.  
‘ Thus, indeed, all the good which men have is of God,  
‘ and accordingly when God rewardeth a good work of  
‘ man, *he crowneth his own gift*. This then is also of  
‘ grace, even as all things are of grace that men have,  
‘ according to the will of God. God’s goodness is the  
‘ first cause why he confers any good to man ; and so it  
‘ may not be that God doeth good on men, but if he do  
‘ it freely, by his own grace ; and with this understood,  
‘ we shall grant that men deserve of God.’ But the  
doctrine of short-sighted men ‘as was Pelagius, and  
‘ others, who conceive that nothing may be, unless it be  
‘ of itself, as are mere substances, is to be scorned, and  
‘ left to idiots.’ It is then remarked, in connection with

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<sup>1</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg.

the story of the Centurion, whose faith had elicited the preceding observation. ‘ Learn we of this knight, to be  
‘ meek in heart, and in word and in deed ; for he granted  
‘ first, that he was under man’s power, and yet by power  
‘ of man he might do many things ; much more should  
‘ we know that we are under God’s power, and that  
‘ we may do nothing but by the power of God ; and woe  
‘ shall hereafter be to us, if we abuse this power. This  
‘ root of meekness, therefore, should produce in us all  
‘ other virtues.”

It is evident that, in the mind of the Reformer, the doctrine of these passages, dangerous as its tendencies are sometimes said to be, was connected with a feeling of the most earnest piety. It is in the following terms that he endeavors to strengthen the mind of the Christian worshipper, while suffering under the adversities of life, and especially from the contempt of men. ‘ As men who  
‘ are in a fever desire not that which were *best* for them,  
‘ so men in sin covet not that which is best for them in  
‘ this world. The world said that the apostles were fools,  
‘ and forsaken of God ; and so it would say to-day of all  
‘ who live like them : for worldly joy, and earthly possessions alone pleaseth them, while of heavenly things, and  
‘ of a right following after Christ, they savour not. And  
‘ this their choice, in the present world, is a manifest  
‘ proof against them, that in soul, they are not holy, but  
‘ turned aside to things of the world. For as the palate  
‘ of a sick man, distempered from good meat, moveth



‘ him to covet things contrary to his health, so it is with  
‘ the soul of man when it savoureth not of the law of  
‘ God. And *as the want of natural appetite is a deadly*  
‘ *sign to man, so a wanting of spiritual relish for God’s*  
‘ *word is a sign of his second death.*” Yet men are said  
to judge of their participation in the favour of God, by  
the success of their worldly enterprises. But to expose  
this error, it is observed, “ we should leave these sensible  
‘ signs, and take the example of holy men, as of Christ  
‘ and his apostles ; how they had not their bliss on earth,  
‘ but that here Christ ordained them pain, and the  
‘ hatred of the world, even suffering to the men whom  
‘ he most loved,—and this to teach us how to follow  
‘ him.” It is therefore said to follow, that in this  
world, the marks of patient suffering should much rather  
be taken, as those which bespeak the love of God.<sup>1</sup>

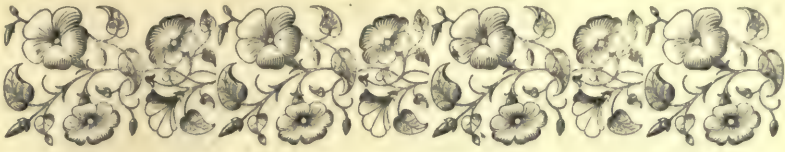
The connexion between this independence of terres-  
trial evils and the faith of the gospel, is thus pointed out :  
‘ If thou hast a full belief of Christ, how he lived here  
‘ on earth, and how he overcame the world, thou also  
‘ overcomest it, as a kind son. For if thou takest heed how  
‘ Christ despised the world, and followest him here,  
‘ as thou shouldst by the faith of the Father, thou must  
‘ needs overcome it. *And here it is manifest what many*  
‘ *men are in this world. They are not born of God, nor do*  
‘ *they believe in Christ. For if this belief were in them,*

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<sup>1</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. p. 78 .

‘ *they should follow Christ in the manner of his life*, but  
‘ *they are not of faith*, as will be known in the day of  
‘ *doom*. What man should *fully believe* that the day of  
‘ *doom will be anon*, and that God shall then judge men,  
‘ *after what they have been in his cause* ; and not prepare  
‘ *himself to follow Christ for this blessing thereof* ? Either  
‘ *the belief of such men sleepeth*, or they want a *right*  
‘ *belief* ; since men who love this world, and rest in the  
‘ *lusts thereof*, *live as if God had never spoken in his word*,  
‘ *or would fail to judge them for their doing*. To all Chris-  
‘ *tian men*, therefore, the faith of Christ’s life is needful,  
‘ *and hence we should know the gospel*, for this *telleth the*  
‘ *belief of Christ*.”

It would be easy to extend extracts of this nature to a great length, but these passages will suffice to show the solicitude of Wycliffe to adapt himself to his auditory, when ‘postilating’ from the pulpit at Lutterworth—no less than when lecturing from his chair in Oxford.



## CHAPTER XII.

### WYCLIFFE AS AN AUTHOR.



WYCLIFFE achieved much as a preacher, more as a professor, most of all as an author. With pecuniary resources which appear to have been at all times inconsiderable, and without the aid of the printing-press, he gave an impulse to the mind of his age. Through the length and breadth of this country, his name and doctrines became familiar to all people ; while upon the Continent, as will appear in its place, his writings diffused influences which spread alarm through cabinets and conclaves. To counteract the innovations thus originated, monarchs and churchmen deem it necessary to combine their authority, and to take their measures after the most formidable fashion.

An English bishop writes to a foreign correspondent,

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<sup>1</sup> Cochleus, Hist. Husset. Lib. I. Lewis, 179.



that the works issued by Wycliffe, which he had himself collected, formed two large volumes, and appeared to him to contain as much matter as the works of Augustine. Our own Henry Wharton, a man who has a right to be heard on this subject, assures us that the manuscript writings of the Reformer which he had seen, would extend, if all were printed, to some four or five folio volumes.<sup>1</sup>

In Bohemia, and in other countries, many of the works of our Reformer were largely transcribed, and widely circulated. Lepus, archbishop of Prague, committed some two hundred volumes of works, attributed to Wycliffe, to the flames—many of them beautifully written, and in ornamental and costly bindings.<sup>2</sup> In the proceedings of the great Council of Constance, accordingly, which took place in 1415, the name of John Huss is hardly more prominent than that of the Englishman, John Wycliffe, who, as was well known, had become, by his writings, the great preceptor of the Bohemian martyr.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Harmer's *Specimens of Errors in the History of the Reformation*, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, *Fasciculus Rerum*, I. 291. Among the works so destroyed were many scholastic treatises, and a copy of the *Dialogus*. The scholastic treatises bore the following titles. *De Ideis*. *De Materia et Forma*. *De Individuatione temporis*. *De Probationibus propositionum*. *De Universalibus*. *De Hypotheticis*. The remainder mentioned are—*Dialogus*. *Dialogus*. *De Incarnatione Verbi Divini*. *De Corpore Christi*. *De Trinitate*. *De Simonia*. *De Attributis*. *De Decalogus*. *De Dominio Civili*. *Super Evangelicæ Sermones per Circulum Anni*. *Hist. et Mon. Johannes Huss*. I. 113.

It was in 1377 that Wycliffe found the ruling churchmen first openly arrayed against him. For awhile, the authorities of the state appeared disposed to shield him from the assaults made upon him by the authorities of the church. But in 1381, the scale was manifestly turning in favour of his persecutors. Neither his friends in the University, nor those among the influential laity elsewhere, proved powerful enough to sustain him in the bolder policy which he then avowed. His adherents indeed, were still formidable, sufficiently so to oblige his enemies to content themselves with pursuing a cautious and timid course towards him. But withdrawing from Oxford under these circumstances, Wycliffe directed the current of his thought and labour more than ever towards the people.

Now it was, that the Reformer began to pour forth an almost ceaseless stream of publications, in the mother-tongue.<sup>1</sup> He at once saw, in so doing, that if these publications were to be widely diffused and generally read, among the many popular qualities necessary to that end, it would be indispensable, in respect to most of them, that they should possess the advantage of brevity. Hence

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<sup>1</sup> This policy filled his enemies with much wrath, and the wrath was not of short continuance. 'Not content,' says Polydore Virgil in his history, 'with having spread his heresy, by means of books written in Latin—from those books he published many more written in the language of his country, that so even the country people might be made skilful in his mischievous superstition—nor did he seek that end in vain.' Hist. Angliæ. Lib. 19.

a large proportion of the writings of Wycliffe, especially of those in English, will be found to consist of Tracts rather than Treatises. Some of these consist of a few pages, others are more extended, but very few of them, if printed, would exceed the limits of a very small book.

We have sometimes imagined ourselves present, while the 'text-writer,' as he was called, has bent over his parchment, and multiplied transcripts of these missives, one after another, as a matter of handicraft, and to order. Sometimes the craftsman gives himself to this labour purely from a regard to the gain of it—more frequently, this printer of those times, pursues his task the more pleasantly, inasmuch as he has a sincere sympathy with those startling thoughts, and earnest words, which are to be sent abroad by such means. We see the copies go forth from such workshops, and put in the way of finding purchasers in old Paternoster Row, and in places of like significance in Oxford, and elsewhere. The manner of vending such commodities in that day differed, no doubt, considerably, from the methods which have been common in our modern book-trade. Still, the manner of doing such business, even in that time, was manifestly such as to give ready circulation to products of this description, especially when charged with thoughts worthy of being known and remembered. Even the old town of Lutterworth must have had its 'text-writers,' labouring in their function, in obedience to the wishes of its Rector. Without much and immediate assistance of this nature,



works so numerous could not have been issued with such rapidity ; and a labour so great as that of translating the Bible could never have been accomplished. The 'writer' not only made thought permanent and portable then, as the printer does now, but possessed this *advantage*, that his work could be carried on in any place, without depending on an apparatus so cumbrous and *detectable* as the printing-press. In our thoughts, we have often followed the copies of works so prepared, and so disposed of, into the dwelling-places and relationships of the purchasers ;—and pleasant has it been to gaze on the groups who listen as these tractates are read, now in the cottage of the 'plowman,' and now in the house of the borough or village artizan—here in the wainscoted apartment of the tradesman or merchant, and there in the mansion of the knight or the noble. For into connexions thus wide did these small books find their way, everywhere calling forth the sympathies or the antagonism of the times.

But in some places, and at certain junctures, it was eminently perilous to be known as possessing a fragment of such a literature. The most inquisitorial search was often made to seize and destroy such productions. But as the search for the forbidden treasure became eager, the more cautious were the methods devised to elude it. Persons living in our time, have had remembrance of men who were present at the taking down of apartments in an ancient house in Lutterworth, in which there were concealed recesses, where many prohibited books, and a copy

of Wycliffe's Bible, are said to have been long secreted, subsequently to the death of the Reformer. In most houses at all above the meaner sort, there were, in those times, such places of concealment : and often they were so used. From this cause it happens, that numerous as were the writings of Wycliffe, there is scarcely a vestige of them that has not survived, through some channel or other, to our own time. When the Reformation came, and it ceased to be dangerous to be in possession of such things, it was found that, after a century and a half of reaction, and of comparative barbarism, the treasured fruit of Wycliffe's genius had been carefully hoarded by the people, so that such men as Archbishop Parker, and Archbishop Ussher, did not find it difficult to enrich their libraries with large collections of this description. It now appears, that there are at this time extant, not less than a hundred and seventy manuscripts, presenting the whole, or parts, of Wycliffe's translation of the Bible.<sup>1</sup> This has happened, be it remembered, notwithstanding the decree of our Romish priesthood, aided by the civil power, which made it a crime, to be followed by heavy penalties, for any man to read or to retain such writings.

In this chapter we shall give some account of such of the Reformer's productions, as belong to this later period of his history, and which have not come under our notice

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<sup>1</sup> Wycliffe's Bible, vol. I. List of Manuscripts, p.p. xxxix.—lxiv.

in the preceding chapters. The Author may here venture to say, that when his own attention was first directed to this subject, scarcely anything had been done towards determining the dates of the various tracts and treatises attributed to Wycliffe. From many of the most important of his works, not an extract had ever been made, and in cases in which passages were cited, they were, for the most part, brief, unattended by any analysis of the pieces from which they were taken, or by any attempt to determine when they were written, or made public. The effect of this negligence was, that confusion and contradiction rested on the history of the Reformer generally, and especially on some of the most material points in it. Treatises which were not written by him until the last year, or nearly so, of his life, have been cited, as if written and published by him long before the first prosecution was instituted against him ; and ground has thus been furnished for casting the gravest imputations on his memory. With regard to many disputed points, we have no evidence that the Reformer had ever expressed himself prior to 1377, as we know he did subsequently to 1381. It was not until after the year last mentioned, that he wrote the fourth book of his *Dialogues*, as internal evidence demonstrates ; and a careful examination of his English treatises would have sufficed to show, by the same kind of evidence, that the greater part of them could not have been written, until within the last two or three years of his life. It is by deter-



mining these points, and only by so doing, that the conduct of the Reformer, when summoned to appear before the Papal Commissioners in 1377, can be placed in its true light—the light honorable to him; and that the student of the life of Wycliffe, can become really observant of the process of self-emancipation, through which his mind passed, especially within the last seven or eight years of his career.

We have seen how the Reformer acquitted himself in his controversy with the friars, which dates from 1360, and in his defence of the crown, and against the papacy, on the question of the census, in 1365. We have been with him in the presence of his prosecutors in St. Paul's, and at Lambeth, some twelve years later; we have read his dispute with an 'anonymous monk;' his 'Complaint' to the king and parliament; and the defence of his doctrine in the 'Wicket,' as published subsequently to that time. We have listened, also, to his lectures, as professor of divinity in Oxford, until 1381; and to his sermons, year by year, from that time, as Rector of Lutterworth, and have been made acquainted with the manner in which he could descant on such topics as the Papal Schism, and the right of the laity to have possession of the Sacred Scriptures in their own tongue. We are not, therefore, altogether unacquainted with 'Wycliffe as an Author.' But there is much more to be known concerning him in this view, and that should be known to us, before we attempt to estimate the claims of his genius

in this respect. His English pieces, written in Lutterworth between 1381 and the close of 1384—apparently the most laborious period of his life—give us many of his ripest thoughts as a Reformer, expressed with an earnestness of feeling, which seems to become only more intense as life is nearing towards its close. We repair then, to Lutterworth, and become observers there of the manner in which the Reformer, expelled from Oxford, still labours to advance the work of reformation. In so doing, however, we shall be obliged to restrict our notices to a selection from these works—an analysis and description of the whole would swell to a large space. The dates of the manuscripts we shall select, are determined by their references to events of the time, as to the Papal Schism, which did not originate until 1377 ; to the persecution of the ‘ poor priests,’ a class of men of the John Ashton description, who do not make their appearance until a few years before the Reformer’s death ; to the discussions in relation to the Eucharist, and the Translation of the Scriptures into English, which do not become observable earlier than 1381 ; and to the Crusade against the Antipope, which was not proclaimed until 1382.

In a manuscript volume in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, including a series of the most interesting of the works published by Wycliffe in English, the first in order is a piece intitled DE HYPOCRITARUM IMPOSTURIS. It consists of a commentary on the text, “ *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,*” and is meant to

identify the mendicant orders with that sort of ancient religionists, as being, like them, devoid of all sincerity.<sup>1</sup> The treatise extends to twenty-two pages, and from its reference to the Papal Schism, and to the disputes concerning the Eucharist, we regard it as written at Lutterworth, when the Author had retired from Oxford. A few passages will suffice to indicate the spirit of this performance.

‘See now,’ says our Author, ‘where these friars break  
‘falsely all the commandments of God. If they choose  
‘to be ruled more after the ordinance of sinful men and  
‘idiots, than after the clean ordinance of Christ, and say,  
‘that sinful man’s ordinance is better and truer for man,  
‘and more perfect, than is the clean ordinance of Christ  
‘—then they worship false gods, and are heretics and  
‘blasphemers, and so they break the first commandment  
‘of God. If they dread more, and punish more, for  
‘breaking a sinful man’s traditions, than for breaking  
‘the commandments of God, and study and love more  
‘their private rules, than the commands of God, then  
‘they worship, love, and dread sinful man, and, it may  
‘be, devils damned, more than God Almighty—for as  
‘Austin saith, a man maketh that thing his God, the  
‘which he dreadeth most and loveth most.

‘If they hinder curates and poor priests from teaching

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<sup>1</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge, p.p. 1—22. Trinity College, Dublin. Class c. Tab. iii. No. 2, p.p. 1—17.



‘man God’s law, by hypocrisy and help of Antichrist’s laws, for dread lest their hypocrisy be perceived, and their winning and worldly pride laid low, then are they cursed *man-slayers, and the cause of the damnation of all the souls that perish through their default*, in not knowing and keeping God’s commandments. If they preach principally for worldly muck and vain-glory, and so preach to be praised of men, and not simply and plainly the gospel of Christ, for his glory, and the gain of men’s souls, then are they corrupters of God’s word, as Paul saith.’

It is in the following terms that the Reformer exhorts the men of his time to Christian fidelity.

‘It is cowardice in Christ’s disciples, if they spare for bodily pain and death, to tell openly the truth of God’s law. And therefore telleth Christ afterwards to his disciples, that they should dread God and nothing else, supremely. Truly, saith Christ, I say to you, my friends, be not afraid of them that slay the body, and after those things have no more which they shall do. But I shall shew you whom you shall dread; dread ye him, who, after he hath slain, hath power to send into hell; and so I say to you, dread him. Here Christ will that men dread nothing principally, but God, and offence to him. *For if men dread bodily pains and death, and therefore, cease to tell openly the truth, they are, with this, unable to regain the bliss of heaven; and if they say openly and stedfastly the truth of God, nothing*

*' may harm them, so that they keep patience and charity.'*

This treatise contains much more to the same effect. Towards the close, Wycliffe laments the sale of benefices, said to be common everywhere, but most common at Rome, 'where he who can bring much gold,' is sure to be most successful. The men so introduced, are described as setting an example of 'pride, lechery, and other sins,' and as hindering 'true priests from teaching God's law.' In common speech, such men were spoken of, as 'able curates, and great men of Holy Church;' but Wycliffe denounces this language, as a sample of 'Antichrist's blasphemy.'

In these later years, the Reformer had reason to deplore the want of Christian fidelity in 'secular lords,' scarcely less than in the 'satrap' churchmen of the times. In the maintenance of their worldly dignity, the great men of the age were ready to labor much, and to fight valiantly—'but to maintain God's law, and to stand for 'the worship to which they are bound, upon pain of 'losing their lordship, and body and soul in hell without 'end, who is that lord that would truly speak, labour, 'and suffer meekly, despite of persecution, in time of 'need? Those lords ought to quake against doomsday, 'and against the time of their death, that travail more 'largely to maintain their worldly lordship, and to seek 'their own worship, than to maintain the rightful ordinance of Jesus Christ in his church, and to nourish and

'maintain Christian souls in good governance and holy life.'

The next Treatise in this collection is intitled, DE OBEDIENTIA PRELATORUM. Its English title is, '*How men owe obedience to prelates,*' &c. As the great burden of it is a denunciation of the course pursued by Courtney, and his coadjutors, towards the 'poor priests,' and others, its date should not be fixed earlier than 1382. It opens with a complaint, that '*prelates slander poor priests, and other Christian men, saying, that they will not obey their sovereign, nor fear the curse, nor dread, nor keep the law, but despise all things that are against their liking.*'<sup>1</sup>

On this ground, these 'poor priests and Christian men,' are denounced as 'worse than Jews and pagans;' and it is taught, that 'all lords, and prelates, and mighty men, should destroy them, for else they will destroy holy church, and make each man to live as him liketh, that so they may the more destroy Christendom.'

It is in the following manner that Wycliffe deals with this charge.

'But here poor priests and true men say, they would meekly and willingly obey God and holy church, and to each man in earth, in so far as he teacheth truly God's commandments, and profitable truth for their

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<sup>1</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dublin. Class c. Tab. iii. No. 12. 17—23.



‘souls. And no more oweth any man to obey Christ,  
‘God and man, nor to any apostle. And if any worldly  
‘prelate asketh more obedience, he surely is Antichrist,  
‘and Lucifer’s master, for Jesus Christ is the God of  
‘righteousness and truth, and of peace and charity, and  
‘may not do against righteousness and truth, nor against  
‘the health of man’s soul, nor against charity, since he  
‘may not lie, nor deny himself. How then should any  
‘sinful prelate charge and constrain men to do against  
‘righteousness, and the health of their souls, in good con-  
‘science? For Christ saith in the gospel of John, that  
‘the Son may not do but that thing which he seeth the  
‘Father do; and, therefore, Christ commanded all men,  
‘that they should not believe in him, but as he did the  
‘works of the Father in heaven. Why then should  
‘Christian men be constrained by Antichrist’s clerks to  
‘do after their commandments, when they do no works  
‘of God, but the works of the fiend? And thus Christ  
‘speaketh to the Jews, and asketh why they believe not  
‘in him, if he saith truth. Therefore, also, Christ saith to  
‘the Jews—Who of you shall reprove me of evil; and he  
‘would that each man had done so, if he might have  
‘done so truly. Therefore, in the time of his passion,  
‘he said to the bishop’s servant who smote him on the  
‘face, “If I have spoken evil, bear thou witness of the  
‘evil.” And thus if prelates are vicars of Christ, they  
‘ought to follow him in this obedience, and ask no  
‘more of any man.’

Wycliffe often complains that the prelates should thus demand greater reverence and submission than had been claimed by the apostles, or by Christ himself; and this, while their life commonly bore so little resemblance to that of the Redeemer. He bids them remember that 'Christ, God and man, sought man's soul, lost through sin, thirty years, and more, with great travail and weariness, and many thousand miles upon his feet, in great cold, and storm, and tempest!' To this example it is contended, his vicars should be, at least in some good measure, conformed; and it is demanded, with some warmth—'Why should a sinful idiot claim more obedience than did Christ and his apostles?'

It is maintained, further, that no man should leave the greater duty, in favour of the less; and that the duty to continue to preach the gospel, must be more manifest than the obligation to obey any summoning from prelates, who, as all men knew, would gladly prevent such preaching. This summoning of prelates, he insists, 'is not grounded in Christ's life, nor in the life of his apostles, nor in reason, but in *Antichrist's power, through the endowing of the church with secular lordship, contrary to Holy Writ.* Thus, instead of Christ's meekness, and poverty, and charity, and true teaching of the gospel, 'is brought in the worldly power of priests, and simony, and covetousness, and dissension among Christ's people, and *bodily tormenting of them by priests, as though they were worldly lords of liege men.*' Concerning such

men, as setting forth such claims, he demands, 'Where  
'are more false Antichrists, more poisonous heretics, or  
'more accursed blasphemers.'

The maxim expounded in the next section, is, 'That  
'no man oweth to put God's bidding behind, and the  
'biddings of sinful men before;' and inasmuch as Christ  
biddeth every man to discharge his natural obligation  
towards his wife and children, all contrary bidding,  
notwithstanding, much more is every priest bound to  
the discharge of his spiritual duties toward the flock  
committed to him, in place of seeking to please men,  
by leaving his 'sheep unkept, among the wolves of  
'hell.' Prelates may enjoin the contrary, but in such  
case no prelate is to be obeyed. It is in the following  
terms that Wycliffe further reasons on this subject.

'By reason, and by man's law, if a man be summoned  
'together by a higher judge and a less, he shall be ex-  
'cused from the less by virtue of the higher. But each  
'man is summoned, first of God, to worship him with all  
'his wit and all his might. And by virtue of this chief  
'dominion, he oweth to be excused from the less.

'Men of law say, and reason also, that it is worse than  
'all to take doom under a suspected doomsman. But  
'these worldly prelates are suspected doomsmen against  
'God's servants, for they are enemies to the persons of  
'Christ's servants, and also to the cause of God. And  
'the new religious assessors of these worldly prelates are  
'more to be suspected than any other, for they put the



‘ decrees of the church, and of their founders, before the  
‘ law of God. And, thus charge *deficiency* and *evil* on  
‘ the Author of Holy Writ, deceiving lords and ladies in  
‘ matters of faith and charity, and making them to trust  
‘ that it is alms to destroy true men, that stand fast for  
‘ God’s law and true living ; and thus the damnable ig-  
‘ norance of God’s law, and the accursed life of those un-  
‘ holy prelates, and the strong maintaining of their own  
‘ sin and the sins of other men, is the cause why poor priests,  
‘ and Christian men, have been suspected of heresy, and  
‘ counted enemies, both of God’s cause and of his servants.’

‘ But let prelates study busily and truly Holy Writ,  
‘ and live openly well thereafter, and destroy open sin of  
‘ other men ; and poor priests and Christian men, without  
‘ any summoning, would with great travail and cost and  
‘ willingness, by land and by water, meekly come to  
‘ them and do them obedience and reverence, as they  
‘ would to Peter and Paul. Let the world judge whether  
‘ these divisions come from worldly prelates, ignorant  
‘ and cursed in life, or from poor priests and true men,  
‘ that fain desire, night and day, to know God’s will and  
‘ worship, and to do it before all things.’

In this manner the Reformer meets the charge of disobedience to ecclesiastical superiors, as made against his ‘ poor priests.’ In answer to the further charge against them, of making light of church censures, Wycliffe thus writes :—

‘ As to cursing, (excommunication) Christian men say

‘truly, that they dread it so much, that they would not  
‘willingly or knowingly deserve God’s curse, for any  
‘good in earth or in heaven, nor man’s curse, *in so far as*  
‘*it accordeth with the rightful curse of God.* But they  
‘will with great joy of soul, rather suffer man’s wrongful  
‘curse, than knowingly or willingly break any com-  
‘mandment of God, for to win thereby all the worship-  
‘ping in the world, and to keep their body in all good,  
‘never so long, and would rather suffer slandering, and  
‘backbiting, and imprisoning, and exile—hanging, draw-  
‘ing, quartering, and burning, than to forsake the truth  
‘of Holy Writ, and the life of Christ.’

Then it is said, that these poor priests do not ‘dread  
‘or keep the law, but despise all things that are against  
‘their liking.’ Wycliffe answers,—‘As to the law, true  
‘men say, that they will meekly and wilfully dread  
‘God’s law, up to their knowledge and might, and each  
‘law of man’s making, in so far as they know that it  
‘accordeth with God’s law, and reason, and good con-  
‘science. Christian men know well from the faith of  
‘Scripture, that neither Peter nor Paul, nor any crea-  
‘ture, may do aught lawfully against the truth of Holy  
‘Writ, nor against the edification of the holy church—  
‘that is, against the good teaching, governing, and amend-  
‘ing of Christian souls. What power have these worldly  
‘prelates to make so many wicked laws, since Christ  
‘curseth those who make wicked laws, and commandeth  
‘that no man shall add to his words, nor take from

' them, on pain of the great curse of God—that is to say, ' let no man add a false interpretation, or a false gloss to ' Holy Writ—for then, as Jerome saith, he is a heretic ; ' and let no man draw any truth away from God's words, ' for those words include all needful truth, all truth profitable for man's soul. And to this intent, saith Paul, ' in his epistle, if even an apostle, or an angel from ' heaven, preach other thing, than that is taught of Christ ' and his apostles, we must not obey.' In this manner did the Reformer assert the sufficiency of Scripture, and the right of private judgment. His reasoning, in this connexion, is valid, only as these principles are ceded.

In the collection of manuscripts now under consideration, this treatise relating to the obedience claimed by the prelates, is followed by another treating of the duties which are said to pertain to the men raised to that office. This treatise is intitled, *DE CONVERSATIONE ECCLESIASTICORUM*, and begins with the words, '*Here it telleth of Prelates, &c.*' It extends to forty-three chapters, and from its reference to Spencer's crusade, and to the wrongs inflicted by it upon the Flemings, it could not have been written earlier than the summer of 1383.

In the first chapter, it is shown that our Lord and his apostles were devoted to the work of preaching, and were studious that their lives might be commendatory of their doctrine. 'Christ,' it is said, 'ordained all his ' apostles and disciples, both before his death, and after ' his rising from the dead, to preach the Gospel to all



‘men; and since prelates and priests ordained of God, come in the stead of apostles and disciples, they are all bound by Jesus Christ, both God and man, thus to preach the Gospel.’ Three things are said to be included in feeding the church after the manner intended by our Lord in his injunction to Peter:—the example of a good life; the true preaching of the Gospel; and a willingness to suffer death, if need be, so that men may be established in the truth, and in the hope of bliss. The case of Eli and his sons is cited, as showing the evils which follow, not only to families, but to nations, from the example of an unholy priesthood. “Woe is me,” said Paul, “if I preach not the Gospel.” Ezekiel speaks to the same effect; and as Peter was denounced as Satan, when opposing himself to the death of Christ, so may it be with prelates, if they interpose to prevent that salvation from coming to men, which, through the death of Christ, has been brought so near to us. ‘Christ,’ says Wycliffe, ‘purged the temple with his own hands, as the Gospel telleth, in token, that if the priests were good, the people would soon be amended. And for this reason, true men say, that prelates are more bound to preach truly the Gospel, than their subjects are bound to pay them their tithes, for that is more profitable to both parties, and God chargeth that more. Therefore, prelates are more accursed if they cease from their preaching, than the people are if they cease to pay tithes, even though prelates do their office well.’ Matins,

masses, and chauntings are man's ordinances, but the preaching of the Gospel is of Divine obligation, being enjoined by Christ, both before and after his passion. The whole treatise is in this spirit. We marvel as we read, that a man who could thus write, should have escaped the vengeance of the parties so assailed.

In the third chapter of this work, the Reformer discourses with much freedom concerning the equipage, the gluttony, the drunkenness, and the profanity of many among the prelates, which are said to be such, as to proclaim them members of the 'devil's church,' rather than of 'holy church.' 'Prelates,' he writes, 'rob the poor 'liege men of the king by false excommunications, put 'forth under colour of holy correction, but giving men 'leave to dwell in sin from year to year, and from one 'seven years to another—and commonly all their life 'long, if they pay by year twenty shillings, or something 'more or less.' Should certain bishops, distinguished as vendors of this sort of merchandize, live through some twenty years, the result it is said must be, that they will amass not less than sixty thousand marks by such means. 'In this manner,' says Wycliffe, 'these wicked prelates 'sell men's souls to Satan, for which souls Christ shed 'his precious heart's blood upon the cross.' Should secular lords attempt to amend this state of things, then, it is said, they are slandered, excommunicated, and their lands are laid under an interdict.—' And thus almost 'all men are conquered to the fiend, and these prelates



‘ shew themselves very antichrists, procurators of Satan, and traitors to Jesus Christ and his people.’

One prolific source of this corruption is said to be the prevalence of Simony. Most of the dignitaries above censured, are said to enter upon their office by such means, and the evil is said to cleave to them, ‘ as a leprosy all through.’ Lords and ladies are spoken of as being generally implicated in this sin,—‘ but the simony of the court of Rome doeth most harm, for it is most common, and done most under the colour of holiness, and robbeth most our land, both of men and treasure,—for when a lord hath the gold for presentation, then the gold dwelleth still in the land ; but when the pope hath the first-fruits, then the gold goeth out, and cometh never again.’ Nor is it the purchase of benefices with money alone, that is reprobated as simony. ‘ Pardons, if they are ought worth,’ says the Reformer, ‘ must be *free*, and to take money for them is to *sell* God’s grace, and so simony.’ Masses for the dead, accordingly, and other services for which money is taken, are described as so much fraudulent invention, designed to aid the priesthood in spoiling the people. We cite a passage from the seventh chapter of this work, as expressive of the indignation often felt by Wycliffe when this accumulation of abuses rose after this manner before him.

‘ Worldly prelates command that no man shall preach the gospel, but at their will and limitation ; and forbid men to hear the gospel, on pain of the great curse.



‘ But Satan in his own person never dared do so much  
‘ despite to Christ or his gospel, for he applied Holy Writ  
‘ to Christ, and would have pursued his intent thereby.  
‘ And since it is Christ’s counsel and commandment to  
‘ priests generally to preach the gospel, and this thing  
‘ they must not do without leave of these prelates, who,  
‘ in some cases, may be fiends of hell, then it follows,  
‘ that priests may not do Christ’s counsels and com-  
‘ mandments without the leave of fiends ! Ah ! Lord  
‘ Jesus, are these sinful fools, and it may be fiends of  
‘ hell, more knowing and mighty than thou ; that true  
‘ men must not do thy will without leave from such ! Oh,  
‘ Lord God, all-knowing, and all full of charity, how long  
‘ wilt thou suffer these Antichrists to despise thee, and  
‘ thy holy Gospel, and to let the health of Christian  
‘ men’s souls ? Endless, rightful Lord ! this thou suffer-  
‘ est for sin reigning generally among the people ; but,  
‘ endless merciful and good Lord, help thy poor wretched  
‘ priests and servants to have love and reverence to thy  
‘ gospel, that they may not be let from doing thy worship  
‘ and will, through the false feignings of Antichrist and  
‘ his fiends. Almighty Lord God, merciful, and in know-  
‘ ledge endless, since thou sufferedst Peter and all the  
‘ apostles to have so great dread and cowardice in the  
‘ time of thy passion, that they all fled away through  
‘ fear of death, and for a poor woman’s voice, and  
‘ afterwards by comfort of the Holy Ghost, thou madest  
‘ them so strong that they were afraid of no man, nor of

‘ pain, nor of death, help now by gifts of the Son, and  
‘ Holy Ghost, thy poor servants, who all their life have  
‘ been cowards, and make them strong and bold in thy  
‘ cause, to maintain the gospel against Antichrist, and  
‘ against all the tyrants of the world ! ” <sup>1</sup>

In the eleventh chapter Wycliffe touches on the subject of prayer. ‘ Prayer,’ he remarks, ‘ standeth principally in good life, and of this prayer speaketh Christ, when he sayeth in the gospel, that we must ever pray. For Augustine and other saints say, that so long as a man dwelleth in charity, so long he prayeth well.’

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<sup>1</sup> The following passages from the ninth and tenth chapters of this Treatise should not be omitted.

‘ These prelates charge more their own cursing, that is many times false, than the most rightful curse of God Almighty. And hereby they mean, and show indeed, but falsely, that they are more than Almighty God in Trinity. For if a man be accursed of prelates, though wrongfully, anon all men are taught by them to flee him as a Jew or a Saracen. And if he dwell forty days under their curse, he shall be taken to prison. But they who are cursed of God, for breaking his commandments, as proud men, envious, gluttons, the unchaste, are not punished thus, but holden virtuous and manly. So God’s curse is set at nought, while the wrongful curse of man is charged above the clouds. And yet, though a man be accursed of God, and of a prelate also, if he will give gold he shall be assoiled (absolved) though he dwell in his sin, and so under God’s curse.

‘ But see now the sinfulness of man’s curse. If a true man shall displease a worldly prelate by teaching and maintaining God’s law, he shall be slandered for an evil man, and forbidden to teach Christ’s Gospel, and the people shall be charged upon pain of the greater curse, to flee, and not to hear such a man, for to save their own souls. And this shall be done under the cover of holiness ; for they will say that such a man teacheth heresy, and bring many false witnesses and



Prayer is also said to 'stand in holy desire,' and 'in word;' but prayer in word *'is naught worth, unless it be done with devotion, and cleanness and holiness of life.* Ah! Lord, since prelates are so far from God's law, that they will not preach the gospel themselves, nor suffer other men to preach it, how abominable is their prayer before God Almighty! Lord! since prelates know not whether their prayer is acceptable or abominable, why do they magnify it so much, and sell it so dear? *For the prayer of a lewd man, (a layman) who shall be saved, is without measure better than the prayer of a prelate who shall be damned.*' Vicious priests, it is observed, 'need to have new laws, made of sinful fools, to colour their sin by, and to gather greedily their tithes, when they do not their office; for God's law helpeth them not thereto, but condemns their pride, cove-

'notaries against him in his absence, and in his presence speak no word. And they pretend, by means of this invented and false law, that if three or four false witnesses, hired by money, say each a thing against a true man, that then he shall not be heard, though he could prove the contrary by two hundred!'

In this manner did the Reformer plead for natural right, and Christian liberty, against the abuses of power on the part of a worldly and vicious clergy. To allow that such methods of proceeding are just, he remarks, would be to allow the justice of the death inflicted on the martyrs, and on Christ himself, against whom it must have been easy to produce any number of such witnesses. By such means, indeed, it were easy to prove 'each king of Christendom foresworn, and therefore no king.' But as the judgment of Elijah prevailed against the multitude of false priests, so, he writes, shall the judgment of one true man prevail against that of a host of prelates.



‘tousness, and other sins.’ He then combats the notion that such men are heard, ‘not for their own holiness,’ but in virtue of holy church, and replies to this ‘dreaming,’ that it is not grounded in Holy Writ, for God saith generally that such prayer is abominable. The offering of strange fire on the ancient altar, betokened this offering of prayer without charity.

In the twelfth chapter, Wycliffe resumes his censure of the prelates who fine, curse, and imprison men, for preaching the Gospel, and who grant absolutions to the most guilty, on payment of the required ‘rent to Anti-christ.’ ‘Coercion,’ he maintains, ‘belongs to lord’s ‘office, as Peter and Paul telleth,’ and all punishing of the body, and loss of goods, should come from the secular power only.

The thirteenth chapter exposes the frauds practised in the matter of indulgences. Prelates are said to ‘destroy ‘foully Christian men, by their feigned indulgences or ‘pardons.’ Such men are described as holding out this promise of indulgence as prescribed ‘by virtue of Christ’s ‘passion and martyrdom, and holy *merits of saints*, which ‘they did more than was needful for their own bliss.’ But this doctrine, it is replied, ‘Christ taught never in the ‘Gospel, and never used it, neither Peter nor Paul.’ Some of these indulgences, it seems, were granted in terms extending over a thousand years, and Wycliffe ridicules such grants by reminding those who value them, that all men believe that after the judgment-day there will be no

purgatory, and that no man knoweth how soon that day may come. But the Reformer pushes his argument on this subject to a length which his opponents must have felt to be not a little inconvenient. 'It seemeth that the Pope and his are all out of charity, if there dwell any soul in purgatory. For he may, with full heart, and without any other cost, deliver them out of purgatory.' To confess the want of inclination in this particular, Wycliffe argues, must be to confess a diabolical want of charity; while to confess the want of power, must be to confess the hypocrisy which makes pretension to such power. Allusion is made to the manner in which these indulgences were dispensed to forward the crusade in Flanders, conducted by bishop Spencer, when it was seen that their use was 'not to make peace, but dissension and wars.' The whole system of indulgences and pardons, is denounced as 'a subtle merchandise of Antichrist's clerks, to magnify their counterfeit power, and to get worldly goods, and to cause men not to dread sin.— Marvellous it is that any sinful fool dare grant anything on the *merit of saints*, for all that ever any saint did, may not bring a soul to heaven, without the grace and might of Christ's passion.' In that passion, it is maintained, 'all merits that are needful' will be found, and the judgment of God hereafter, will not be found to have been influenced by the caprice or the biddings of men. Wycliffe concludes this instructive chapter, by praying that God would of his endless mercy, 'destroy the pride, covet-

‘ousness, hypocrisy and heresy of this feigned pardoning, and make men busy to keep his commandments, and to set fully their trust in Jesus Christ.’

From prelates at home, Wycliffe proceeds to touch on the pretensions of the great prelate abroad;—this he does in the following terms:—‘Also prelates make many bad points of belief, and say it is not enough to believe in Jesus Christ, and to be christened, as Christ saith, in the Gospel of Mark, unless a man also believe that the Bishop of Rome is head of holy church. And certainly the Apostles of Jesus Christ never constrained any man to believe this concerning himself. And yet they were certain of their salvation in heaven. How then should any sinful wretch, who knows not whether he shall be damned or saved, constrain men to believe that he is head of holy church? Certainly, in such case, they must sometimes constrain men to believe that a devil of hell is head of holy church, when the bishop of Rome shall be a man damned for his sins.’

In this bold manner did the genius of our great Reformer separate between the institutional and the moral, the political and the spiritual, in the religion of Christ, inculcating that no reverence should be shown towards a mere office, if not allied with the spirit proper to it—the irreligious man who assumes a religious office, becoming only so much the more guilty, and the more despicable in so doing. It is not difficult to see that this one principle included the germ of all subsequent religious



movement. Heavily does the Reformer complain of the arrogance which insisted that the people should not presume to judge in respect to the life or doctrine of the clergy, while Paul from the third heavens, and Jesus Christ, God and man, challenged such scrutiny from friends and foes. But the design of this doctrine is said to be, that men 'may not reprove such persons for any 'sin whatsoever which they may do;' and that good men may not presume to preach the Gospel, except as bad men shall give them permission, which, according to the notion of Christian liberty maintained by Wycliffe, was to place the authority of Satan before the authority of Christ.

Nor was it enough that this description of clergymen should claim exemption from all popular censure,—they affected the same independence of the highest authorities, and in civil matters no less than those of religion. 'Prelates most destroy obedience to the law of God, for 'they say, that they are not to be subject to secular lords, 'to pay them taxes, or to help the commons; and are not 'to be amended by their subjects (people) of their open 'sins, but only by the Pope, who is their sovereign, and 'he by no man on earth, because he is the greatest of 'all.' But the men who avow this doctrine are reminded, that Christ paid tribute to a heathen emperor, and so to the religion or church of the emperor, when required, though 'he had no secular lordship, nor plenty of tithes, and

‘ much more, therefore, should these rich priests,’ be made to comply with such demands.

In the twenty-second chapter, the Reformer resumes his strictures on the pretensions of the bishop of Rome. ‘ It is said openly,’ he observes, ‘ that there is nothing lawful among Christian men, without leave of the bishop of Rome, though he be Antichrist, full of simony and heresy. For commonly, of all priests he is most contrary to Christ, both in life and teaching ; and he maintaineth more sin, by privileges, excommunications, and long pleas ; and he is most proud against Christ’s meekness, and most covetous of worldly goods and lordships.’ He is described as the head, and representative of all the corruptions by which the ecclesiastical system is disfigured ; and to subject the church to such a sovereignty, it is added, must be assuredly to subject her to the power of Antichrist.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wycliffe speaks elsewhere, of ‘ a third deceit ’ of the enemy on this point, as being to this effect,—‘ that good men shall be saved though there be no preaching, for God saith, they may not perish ; while some wicked men shall never come to bliss for any preaching on earth. Here true men say, that as God hath ordained good men to come to bliss, so he hath ordained them to come to bliss by preaching and by keeping his word. So, as they must needs come to bliss, they must needs hear and keep God’s commandments, and to this end serveth preaching with them. And some wicked men shall now be convinced by God’s grace, and hearing of his word ; and who knoweth the measure of God’s mercy, or to whom the hearing of God’s word shall be thus profitable ? Each man should hope to come to heaven, and should enforce himself to hear and to fulfil the word of God. For since each man hath a free will, and chooseth

The treatise concludes thus—"In these three and forty errors and heresies, men may see how evil prelates destroy Christendom—for of them and no other is this speech—and how they are the cause of wars, and of evil life in the people, and of their damnation. God of his might and mercy amend these errors, and others, if it be his will!"

One of the most considerable Treatises published by the Reformer in the English language, and within little

good or evil;—no man shall be saved, except he that readily heareth, and steadily keepeth the commandments of God. And no man shall be damned, except he that wilfully and endlessly breaketh God's commandments.' It is very difficult to ascertain the real opinions of the Reformer on topics of this nature as set forth in his more scholastic pieces. The preceding observations furnish one of the most explicit expositions of his views that we have met with.

The fourth 'deceit' is, when it is said, 'that men should cease from preaching, and give themselves wholly to prayers and contemplation, because that helpeth Christian men more, and is better.' But in answer, 'true men say, boldly, that true preaching is better than prayer by the mouth, or though it should come from the heart and from pure devotion, and that it edifieth more the people. Christ especially commanded his apostles and disciples to preach the Gospel, and not to shut themselves up in cloisters and churches to pray, as some men. Hence, Isaiah cried, "Woe is me that I was still;" and Paul says, "Woe is me if I speak not the Gospel." Devout prayer in men of good life is good in certain time; but it is against charity for priests to pray ever more, and at no time to preach; since Christ chargeth priests to preach the Gospel more than to say mass and matins.' These enlightened views concerning the paramount importance of preaching, exhibit the mind of Wycliffe as much in advance of his age; but he cites Gregory and Jerome in support of these opinions, and as censuring customs which deprived society of the benefit of good examples, and led to much sin.



more than a year of his decease, is intitled,—“THE GREAT SENTENCE OF THE CURSE EXPOUNDED.”<sup>1</sup> It begins with the words—*First, all heretics again-standing the faith of holy writ be cursed solemnly, four times in the year. &c.* The matter of this treatise is distributed into seventy-nine chapters, and extends to nearly a hundred quarto pages. The reference in the sixteenth chapter, to the war then going on in Flanders, for ‘the love of two false priests, who are open antichrists,’ and some other allusions to contemporary events, fix the date of this publication as certainly not earlier than the summer of 1383.<sup>2</sup> This work expresses the views of the Reformer so fully, and so forcibly, on most of the questions of the time, that we shall restrict our attention to it chiefly, in the remaining space allotted to this chapter. The points in this treatise, which engage the attention of the writer, are those which came before the people from quarter to quarter, as this periodical anathema was pronounced in their hearing.

The Reformer begins by defining heresy, on the authority of Augustine and other clerks, as, “error maintained against Holy Writ.” But our worldly prelates, he remarks, maintain error against Holy Writ “in the matter of preaching the Gospel of Christ, and

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<sup>1</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter III. XV. XVI. XIX. XXVI.

'therefore they are themselves cursed heretics. For  
'when Paul asks how men should preach, but as they  
'are sent, they understand that of such men only as are  
'sent by the pope, and other worldly prelates.' On  
this plea, it is observed, they not only silence many  
good men, causing the servants of God to depend for  
liberty to preach, on approval from 'the children of the  
fiend,' but even an angel from heaven must not dare  
deliver the message of the Almighty to save men's soul's,  
because some worldly priest has presumed to contravene  
the commandment of God. But whatever may be the  
doctrine or practice of the rulers of the church in this  
respect, 'sending by those worldly prelates is not enough,  
'without a sending of God, as Paul saith. Neverthe-  
'less it is so, that poor priests are slandered as *heretics*,  
'*accursed, and imprisoned, without answer*, forasmuch as  
'they stand up for Christ's life and teaching, and the  
'maintenance of the king's regalia."

According to the "Great Sentence," all persons are  
accursed, who would 'spoil, or take away right from  
'holy church, or defraud holy church of any endowment.'  
On this point, it is remarked, that 'Christian men, taught  
'in God's law, call holy church *the congregation of just*  
'*men*, for whom Jesus Christ shed his blood, and they do  
'not so call stones, and timber, and earthly rubbish,  
'which Antichrist's clerks magnify more than God's right-  
'eousness, and the souls of Christian men. True teaching  
'is most due to holy church, and is most charged of God,

‘ and most profitable to Christian souls. Inasmuch there-  
‘ fore as God’s Word, and the bliss of heaven in the souls  
‘ of men, are better than earthly goods, insomuch are  
‘ those worldly priests who withdraw the great debt of  
‘ holy teaching, worse than thieves, and more accursedly  
‘ sacrilegious than the ordinary thief, who breaks into  
‘ churches, and steals thence chalices, and vestments, and  
‘ never so much gold.’ The fault and just doom of such  
men, are illustrated by an allusion to feudal relationships.  
They hold their office on certain conditions, such as  
Christ and the apostles set before them ; and inasmuch  
as they not only fail to perform the duties of their office,  
but prevent others, who are able and willing to perform  
them, from so doing, they are pronounced traitors to the  
said lord, and their office and their emoluments are alike  
a forfeiture.

The third chapter commences with the often-repeated  
complaint, that the clergy should so commonly apply the  
revenues of the church to the purposes of luxury, and  
neglect the poor. But the heaviest censure in this con-  
nection is directed against the pontiff. ‘ Certainly some  
‘ men understand that the cruel manslayer of Rome is  
‘ not Peter’s successor, but Christ’s enemy, and the em-  
‘ peror’s master, and poison under the colour of holiness,  
‘ and that he maketh most unable curates.’ Again—  
‘ This evil manslayer, poisoner, and burner of Christ’s  
‘ servants, is made by evil clerks to be the ground and  
‘ root of all misgovernance in the church : and yet



'they make blind men believe that he is head of holy church, and the most holy Father, who may not sin !' Grosstete is mentioned as having been of a different judgment concerning the papacy in his day, and as having expressed that judgment to the pontiff himself with an integrity and fearlessness ever to be admired.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters treat of the simony, connected with admission to orders, and the obtaining of benefices, and the administration of the sacraments. The ecclesiastical system is said to be so constructed in all respects, as to favor the enriching of the priesthood, and the plunder of the people. But while the exercise of every priestly function carries its tax along with it, some of its acts impose a heavier burden than others. 'If men foolishly make a vow to go to Rome, or Jerusalem, or Canterbury, or on any other pilgrimage, *that* we deem of greater might than the vow made at our christening, to keep God's commandments, to forsake the fiend and all his works. But though men break the highest commandments of God, the rudest parish priest shall anon absolve him. But of the vows made of our own head, though many times against God's will, no man shall absolve, but some great worldly bishop, or the most worldly priest of Rome,—the master of the Emperor, the fellow of God, and the Deity on earth !'

On the sale of *masses*, Wycliffe writes ;—' Oh Lord ! how much is our king and our realm helped by the masses and the prayers of simonists and heretics, full

‘ of pride and envy, and who so much hate poor priests  
‘ for teaching Christ’s life and the gospel.’ But the  
following passage shows that until within a year or two  
of his death, Wycliffe believed in the existence of an in-  
termediate state, and that the devout intercessions of the  
living might be in some sense beneficial to the dead who  
had not passed beyond that state. ‘ Saying of *mass*,  
‘ with *cleanness of holy life*, and *burning devotion*, pleas-  
‘ eth God Almighty, and is profitable to christian souls  
‘ in *purgatory*, and to men *living on earth*, that they may  
‘ withstand temptations to sins.’ The following passage  
shews also that he still thought highly of the function  
of the priest as exercised in consecrating the elements of  
the Eucharist. ‘ Think therefore, ye pure priests, how  
‘ much ye are beholden to God who gave you power to  
‘ sacred his own precious body and blood of bread and  
‘ wine, a power which he never granted to his own mother  
‘ or to angels. Therefore, with all your desire, and  
‘ reverence, and devotion, do your office in this sacra-  
‘ ment ! ’

The eighth chapter commences with passages from St. Gregory, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and others, concerning the duties of the pastoral office. On these passages suitable comment is made ; and it is especially remarked, that the men who have filled this office with the greatest success, have generally been men on whom it has been forced. It is said that no man should seek it, inasmuch as that would be to forget the admonition of Scripture

—"No man taketh this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." When bishoprics were poor, and to become a bishop was to be exposed to martyrdom, it might have been well to aspire to spiritual distinction ; but in these later times, when the office is connected with so much temptation to indulge in every sort of worldliness, a devout man may, with good reason, avoid, rather than seek, such an elevation.

The following passage expresses Wycliffe's opinion respecting the middle-age usage well-known by the name of '*the rights of sanctuary*,' which consisted in extending the privilege of the Hebrew cities of refuge, to certain ecclesiastical edifices ; and not merely in respect to manslaying, but to offences of all descriptions. The dwellers in such places are said to 'challenge franchise ' and privilege, that wicked men, open thieves, and man-slayers, and those who have borrowed their neighbour's ' goods, and are in power to make and pay restitution, ' shall there dwell in sanctuary ; and no man impeach ' them by process of law, nor oath sworn on God's body ; ' and they maintain stiffly that the king must confirm ' this privilege, and such nests of thieves and robbery ' in his kingdom !' In rude states of society, some usage of this nature has generally obtained ; but in the age of the Reformer, its abuses had become greater than its uses. Wycliffe regarded all such thrusting of the authority of the priest into the place of the authority of the magistrate, with suspicion, and remarks in this



treatise, that a man has a better prospect of justice if cited before 'the king or the emperor,' than if obliged to appear before any tribunal called 'court Christian.' On this subject, he expresses himself in this treatise as follows:—

'Worldly clerks, and feigned religious, break and  
'destroy much the king's peace, and his kingdom.  
'For the prelates of this world, and their priests, more  
'or less, say fast, and write in their law, that the king  
'hath no jurisdiction nor power over their *persons*, nor  
'over the *goods of holy church*. And yet Christ and  
'his apostles were most obedient to kings and lords, and  
'taught all men to be subject to them, and to serve them  
'truly and skilfully in bodily works, and to dread them  
'and worship them before all other men. The wise king  
'Solomon put down a high priest who was false to him  
'and his kingdom, and exiled him, and ordained a good  
'priest in his room, as the third book of Kings telleth.

'And Jesus Christ paid tribute to the emperor, and  
'commanded men to pay him tribute. And St. Peter  
'commandeth Christian men to be subject to every crea-  
'ture of men, whether unto the king, as more high than  
'others, or unto dukes, as sent of him to the vengeance  
'of evil-doers, and the praise of good men. Also St.  
'Paul commandeth, by authority of God, that every soul  
'be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power  
'but of God. Princes be not to be dreaded of good  
'workers, but of evil. Wilt thou not dread the power—

‘ do good, and thou shalt have praising of the same. For  
‘ he is God’s minister to thee for good. Surely, if thou  
‘ hast done evil, dread then, for he beareth not the sword  
‘ in vain.

‘ Our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered meekly a painful  
‘ death under Pilate, not excusing himself from his juris-  
‘ diction by his clergy. And St. Paul professed himself  
‘ ready to suffer death by doom of the Emperor’s justice, if  
‘ he were worthy of death, as Deeds (Acts) of the Apostles  
‘ showeth. And Paul appealed to the heathen emperor  
‘ from the priests of the Jews, for to be under his juris-  
‘ diction, and to save his life. Lord ! who hath made  
‘ our worldly clergy exempt from the king’s jurisdiction  
‘ and chastening ; for since God giveth kings this office  
‘ over all misdoers,—clerks, and particularly high priests,  
‘ should be most meek and obedient to the lords of this  
‘ world, as were Christ and his apostles, and should be a  
‘ mirror before all men, teaching them to give this meek-  
‘ ness and obedience to the king and his righteous laws.  
‘ How strong thieves and traitors are they now to lords  
‘ and kings, in denying this obedience, and giving an  
‘ example to all men in the land to become rebels  
‘ against the king and lords ! For in this they teach  
‘ ignorant men, and the commons of the land, both in  
‘ words and laws, and in open deeds, to be false and re-  
‘ bellious against the king and other lords. And this  
‘ seemeth well by their new law of *decretals*, where the  
‘ proud clerks have ordained this—that our clergy shall

‘ pay no subsidy nor tax, nor keeping of our king, and  
‘ our realm, without leave and assent of the worldly  
‘ priest of Rome. And yet many times this proud,  
‘ worldly priest is an enemy of our land, and secretly  
‘ maintaineth our enemies in war against us, with our  
‘ own gold. And thus they make an alien priest, and he  
‘ the proudest of all priests, to be chief lord of the whole  
‘ of those goods which clerks possess in the realm, and  
‘ which is the greatest part thereof ! Where then are there  
‘ greater heretics to God or holy church, and particularly  
‘ to their liege lord in this kingdom, to make an alien  
‘ worldly priest, an enemy to us, the chief lord over  
‘ the greater part of our country !

‘ And commonly the new laws which the clergy have  
‘ made, are contrived with much subtlety to bring down  
‘ the power of lords and kings, and to make themselves  
‘ lords, and to have all in their power. Certainly it seem-  
‘ eth that these worldly prelates are more bent to destroy  
‘ the power of kings and lords, which God ordained for  
‘ the government of his church, than God is to destroy  
‘ even the power of the fiend :—for God setteth the fiend  
‘ a term, which he shall do, and no more ; but he still  
‘ suffereth his power to last, for the profit of Christian  
‘ men, and the great punishment of misdoers ; but these  
‘ worldly clerks would never cease, if left alone, until they  
‘ have fully destroyed kings and lords, with their regalia  
‘ and power ! ’

The next chapter relates to the excommunication com-



monly pronounced against all perjured persons : and prelates, and the beneficed clergy generally, are admonished, that to this sentence they are themselves justly exposed, by reason of the many things in their conduct which are contrary to the oaths taken when entering upon their office.

The next anathema was that pronounced on all persons, who should ' falsify the king's charter, or assist thereto.' But it is alleged, that the lands of the clergy were granted by the king, for certain specific purposes, and that clergymen commonly apply the produce of such lands to purposes the opposite of those specified, and that in so doing, they sin against the charter, both of their earthly and their heavenly sovereign.

' Also, they falsify the king's charter by great treason, ' when they make the proud bishop of Rome, who is the ' chief man-slayer upon earth, and the chief maintainer ' thereof, the chief worldly lord of all the goods which ' clerks possess in our realm, and that is almost all the ' realm, or *the most part thereof*. For he should be the ' meekest and the poorest of priests, and the most busy ' in God's service to save men's souls, as were Christ ' and his apostles, since he calleth himself the chief ' vicar of Christ. Hereby these worldly clerks show ' themselves traitors to God, and to their liege lord the ' king, whose law and regalia they destroy, by their treason in favour of the pope, whom they nourish in the ' works of Antichrist, that they may have their worldly ' state, and opulence, and lusts maintained by him.'

The sixteenth chapter commences with these words :—  
‘ All those who falsify the pope’s bulls, or a bishop’s  
‘ letter, are cursed grievously in all churches four times  
‘ in the year.’ Here Wycliffe proceeds to ask :—

‘ Lord, why was not Christ’s gospel put in this sentence  
‘ by our worldly clerks? Here it seems they magnify  
‘ the pope’s bull more than the gospel; and in token of  
‘ this, they punish more the men who trespass against  
‘ the pope’s bulls, than those who trespass against Christ’s  
‘ gospel. And hereby men of this world dread more the  
‘ pope’s lead (*seal*), and his commandment, than the gospel  
‘ of Christ and his commands; and thus wretched men  
‘ in this world are brought out of belief, and hope, and  
‘ charity, and become rotten in heresy and blasphemy,  
‘ even worse than heathen hounds. Also a penny clerk,  
‘ who can neither read, nor understand a word of his  
‘ psalter, nor repeat God’s commandments, bringeth forth  
‘ a bull of lead, witnessing that he is able to govern  
‘ many souls, against God’s doom, and open experience  
‘ of truth; and to procure this false bull, they incur costs,  
‘ and labour, and oftentimes fight, and give much gold  
‘ out of our land to aliens and enemies, to their comfort  
‘ and our confusion. Also the proud priest of Rome  
‘ getteth images of Peter and Paul, and maketh Chris-  
‘ tian men believe that all which his bulls speak of, is  
‘ done by authority of Christ; and thus, as far as he  
‘ may, he maketh this bull, which is false, to be Peter’s,  
‘ and Paul’s, and Christ’s, and in that maketh them

‘ false. And by this blasphemy he robbeth Christendom  
‘ of faith, and good life, and worldly goods.

‘ And if any poor man tell the truth of Holy Writ,  
‘ against the hypocrisy of Antichrist and his officers,  
‘ naught else follows, but to curse him, to imprison, burn,  
‘ and slay him without answer! It now seemeth that  
‘ John’s prophecy in the Apocalypse is fulfilled, and that  
‘ no man shall be hardy enough to buy or sell, without  
‘ the token of the cursed beast; for now no man shall do  
‘ aught in the street, without these false bulls of Anti-  
‘ christ; notshowing regard to the worship of Jesus Christ,  
‘ and to the Holy Ghost in men’s souls, but all to these  
‘ dead bulls, bought and sold for money, as men buy or  
‘ sell an ox or beast.’

In the seventeenth chapter, the Reformer says:—‘ The  
‘ Gospel telleth us, that at doomsday Jesus Christ shall  
‘ reckon generally with men, for works of *mercy*, and if  
‘ they have not done them, then, as Christ biddeth, they  
‘ shall be damned without end. But Christ shall not then  
‘ speak a word of *tithes*. If, indeed, men grant that  
‘ tithes are works of mercy and alms, as feeding and  
‘ clothing poor men, certainly it seemeth that all this  
‘ cursing is for their own covetousness, not for the lives  
‘ of the people, or any trespass against God. For then  
‘ their curse should be most where there is most sin, and  
‘ despite against God. But this is not done, as all know-  
‘ ing men see manifestly.’ The law, it is alleged, teaches  
that no man who is himself ‘rightfully cursed,’ may



lawfully curse another. But the clergy who fail to discharge the duties of their solemn office, are under the curse of the Head of the Church, and are sinners, 'a thousand-fold more,' than are their people, when their great fault is, that they pay not their tithes.<sup>1</sup>

In the next chapter, the Reformer insists, that the clergy, in place of demanding tithes from the more needy of their flock, should employ their influence with the rich to procure relief for the necessities of the poor.

'Men wonder highly, why curates are so charrouse (*oppressive*) to the people in taking tithes, since Christ

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<sup>1</sup> The Reformer expands this grave accusation in the following terms:—'Christ said that the Son of Man came not to lose men's lives and souls, but to save them—as the Gospel of Luke witnesseth. Why then, dare these wayward curates, to curse so many men's souls to hell, and bodies to prison, and to the loss of chattels, and sometimes to death, for a little muck; while they are themselves cursed of God, for simony done at their entrance into office, and for failure in preaching, and in example of holy life—tithes being not therefore due to them, but only pain in hell! Oftentimes they are evil tormentors, and slay the soul bought with Christ's precious blood, which is better than all the riches of this world. They are not spiritual fathers to Christian souls who would damn them to hell by their cursing for the sake of a little perishing clay! Even pagan persecutors were content to torment the body, and not the soul for evermore; but these children of Satan cast about, by all means in their power, to slay the soul in everlasting pain! Certainly these wayward curates of Satan seem in this thing worse than the fiends of hell; for in hell they torment no soul except for everlasting sin, while these clerks of Satan curse souls to hell for a little temporal debt, which they will pay as soon as they are able; and oftentimes when it is no debt, except by long error, and theft, and custom, brought in against God's commandments!'

‘ and his apostles took no tithes, as men do now ; and  
‘ neither paid them, nor even spoke of them, either in the  
‘ Gospel, or the Epistles, which are the perfect law of  
‘ freedom and grace. But Christ lived on the alms of  
‘ Mary Magdalene, and of other holy women, as the  
‘ Gospel telleth ; and apostles lived, sometimes by the  
‘ labour of their hands, and sometimes took a poor liveli-  
‘ hood and clothing, given of free will and devotion by  
‘ the people, without asking or constraining. And to  
‘ this end, Christ said to his disciples, that they should  
‘ eat and drink such things as were set before them, and  
‘ take neither gold nor silver for their preaching, or  
‘ giving of sacraments. And Paul, giving a general rule  
‘ for priests, saith thus,—“ We, having food, and clothing  
‘ to hile (*cover*) us, with these things be we essayed (*con-*  
‘ *tent*), as Jesus Christ.” And Paul proved that *priests,*  
‘ *preaching truly the Gospel, should live by the Gospel, and*  
‘ *said no more of tithes.* Certainly tithes were due to  
‘ priests and deacons in the old law, and so bodily cir-  
‘ cumcision was then needful to all men, but it is not so  
‘ now, in the law of grace ; and yet Christ was circum-  
‘ cised. But we read not where he took tithes as we  
‘ do, and we read not in all the Gospel where he  
‘ paid tithes to the high priest, or bid any other man  
‘ do so. Lord, why should our worldly priests charge  
‘ christian people with tithes, offerings, and customs,  
‘ more than did Christ and his apostles, and more  
‘ than men were charged in the old law ? For then,

‘all priests, and deacons, and officers of the temple  
‘were maintained by tithes and offerings, and had no  
‘other lordship. But now a worldly priest, who is more  
‘unable than others, by means of a bull of Antichrist,  
‘hath all the tithes and offerings to himself! If tithes  
‘were true by God’s commandment, then everywhere in  
‘Christendom would be one mode of tithing. But it is  
‘not so.—Would to God that all wise and true men  
‘would inquire whether it were not better for to find  
‘good priests by free alms of the people, and in a reason-  
‘able and poor livelihood, to teach the gospel in word  
‘and deed, as did Christ and his apostles, than thus to  
‘pay tithes to a worldly priest, ignorant, and negligent,  
‘as men are now constrained to do by bulls and new or-  
‘dinances of priests.’

Wycliffe desires to know who has given this coercive power to churchmen, seeing that Christ and his disciples had it not, and adds,—‘If the first ordinance of Christ  
‘and his apostles come again to Christendom, then shall  
‘Christian people be *free to take their tithes and offerings*  
‘*from wayward priests, and not maintain them in sin.*’ But it is at the same time said, that they must contribute ‘*reasonable livelihood to good priests*, and this were  
‘much better and easier, both for priests and commons,  
‘for this world and the other.’

Subsequently, mention is made of the council in London, at the time of the ‘earth-shaking,’ an allusion which further shows that this treatise could not have been



written more than two years at the most before the decease of the Reformer. The clergy present on that occasion, are said to have introduced a 'new dispensation,' declaring it to be error to say, 'that secular lords may, at their doom, (in the exercise of their own opinion or authority) take temporal goods from the church which trespasseth by long custom.' To which it is replied, 'If this be error, as they say falsely, then the king, and secular lords, may take no farthing, or farthing's worth, from a worldly clerk, though he should owe him or his liege men never so much, and may well pay it, but will not!' It is insisted, that on this principle, were the college of cardinals to become an organized banditti, the authority of the king should not be exercised to curb their marauding; or should such men send money out of the land to never so great an extent, the monarch must not suppose that it pertains to him to prevent such impoverishment of the realm; and were a body of monks, friars, and clerks, to conspire the poisoning of the king, the queen, and all the lords of the realm, 'yet the king, with all the lords, may not punish such offenders with the loss of one farthing's worth of their goods!' The same exemption, it is argued, might be pleaded, were these persons to dishonour the bed of the sovereign, and to conspire to make one of themselves 'King of all the world.' Priests may rave in this senseless fashion—but far be it from the laity to surrender their patriotism and their manhood at such bidding. Let it be presumed that

the sovereign may not touch the property of such men ; and it must be concluded that he may not touch their persons, seeing that their persons are held to be the most sacred ; and thus to concede this clerical pretension, would be at once to sheathe the sword of the magistrate, and to give a licence to crime on any scale, so long as it should happen to be only clerical crime. But such men should know, it is observed, that holy church consists not of the clergy, but of all good ‘ men and women who shall be saved ; ’ and that to take away the goods which worldly churchmen misapply, and to give them to men who will apply them to their scriptural uses, must be to do the good deeds proper to the magistrate, as the vicar of God ; and no king need fear the censures of the clergy in so doing.

But it was not enough thus to prevent the course of civil justice—the magistrate was often censured because he could not be made to do unjustly. ‘ Then these ‘ worldly clerks curse the king, and his justices, and ‘ officers, because they maintain the Gospel, and true ‘ preachers thereof, and will not punish them according ‘ to the wrongful commandment of Antichrist and his ‘ clerks ; thus cursing true men, and stirring the king ‘ and his liege men to persecute Jesus Christ in his ‘ members, and to exile the Gospel out of our land.’ In many instances, however, the attempt to make such use of the civil sword was successful, and kings and lords were constrained to ‘ torment the body of a just ‘ man, over whom Satan has no power, as though he



‘were a strong thief, casting him into a deep prison ; to  
‘make other men afraid to stand on God’s part against  
‘their heresy.’

Some observations on legal studies occur in this part of the Treatise. The study of the Civil Law is said to be excessive ; and as ‘our people are bound by the king’s statutes,’ these are described as more worthy of being taught by the clergy, and made familiar to the people. The emperor’s law, it is said, should be studied, and its authority admitted, only in so far as ‘it is enclosed in God’s commandments ;’ and it is demanded of those who profess to study the Civil Law, ‘for the *reason* they find in it,’ whether the volume placed in their hands by the Author of reason, is not likely better to repay their labour in that respect. The pope, says Wycliffe, has forbidden the study of Civil Law, and, for once, he adds, ‘the pope’s intent is good ;’ but he observes further, that the canon law is more hostile to the religion of the Bible than the code of Justinian. The whole of the twenty-fourth chapter relates to this subject.

In the next chapter is the following striking observation on one of the most disgraceful usages in the history of religious intolerance. ‘All those who commune with  
‘accursed men, are cursed by our prelates, particularly  
‘if they do it knowingly. But by this sentence it would  
‘seem that God himself is accursed, since no accursed  
‘man may be in this life, unless God shall knowingly  
‘commune with him, and give him breath and suste-



‘ nance, whether he be wrongfully cursed or rightfully ;  
‘ and if he be ready to give such a man grace and for-  
‘ giveness of his sins, if he ask it worthily, and even  
‘ before he ask it, this sentence seems too large, since our  
‘ God may not be accursed.’ In this manner did the Re-  
former deal with a practice in which men have been  
taught to assign religious reasons for doing violence to  
all the instincts of our moral nature. It is one of the  
strong forms in which we read the demoralizing tendency  
of religious bigotry. The Treatise concludes with the  
following earnest utterances :—

‘ Men wonder much why prelates and curates curse so  
‘ fast, since St. Paul and St. Peter have commanded men  
‘ to bless, and not to have a will to curse. And Jesus  
‘ Christ blessed his enemies, and heartily prayed for  
‘ them, even while they nailed him to the cross. Still  
‘ more, men wonder why they curse so fast in their own  
‘ cause, and for their own gain, and not for injury done  
‘ to Christ and his majesty ; since men should be patient  
‘ in their own wrongs, as Christ and his disciples were ;  
‘ and not suffer a word to be done against God’s honour  
‘ and majesty, as by false and vain swearing, ribaldry,  
‘ lechery, and other filth. But most of all, men wonder  
‘ why clerks curse so fast for breaking their own statutes,  
‘ privileges, and wayward customs, more than for the  
‘ open breaking of God’s commandments, since no man  
‘ is cursed of God but for so doing, whatever worldly  
‘ wretches may blabber ; and no man is blessed of God,

‘and shall come to heaven, but if he keep God’s commandments : and particularly in the hour of death, let a man have never so many bulls of indulgence, or pardons, and letters of fraternity, and thousands of masses from priests, and monks, and friars, and it shall be vain. Let prelates and curates, therefore, leave these particulars in their censuring, for many of them are as false as Satan, and let them teach God’s commandments, and God’s curse, and the pains of hell, as inflicted on men if they amend not in this life, and what bliss man shall have from keeping of them, as they thereby teach truly Christ’s gospel, in word, and in example of holy life, and the mercy of God in the highness of his blessing, and so help all to that end, in right belief, and hope toward God, and full charity toward God and man ! God grant us this end. Amen.’

After this manner does Wycliffe discourse in ‘The Great Sentence of the Curse Expounded’ ; and to the same effect does he discourse in many other pieces written about the same time. But it is not compatible with the limits we have prescribed to ourselves, that our analyses and extracts should be extended further. Some account of other treatises, not less entitled to notice than those which have claimed the attention of the reader in this chapter, will be found in the section on the writings of Wycliffe, in the appendix to this volume. Enough, however, has been cited from the productions of the Reformer, in the pages of this work, to enable the reader

to form his own judgment concerning Wycliffe, as an author.

The English language, as found in the writings of Wycliffe, if compared with almost any other sample of it that has descended from his time to our own, is worthy of note, as combining a strong Saxon element, with great copiousness; while in its structure it harmonizes, in a remarkable degree, with the forms of the language which have since become authoritative and settled. An author who, no doubt, wrote in Latin, and probably discoursed in it, as readily as in his mother-tongue, might have been expected to express himself in a diction presenting a large proportion of terms from that language. Especially might we have expected this in his English Bible, consisting as it does throughout, of a rendering from the Latin vulgate. But everywhere, the words, the idiom, and the structure, are mainly from the spoken Saxon, common among the people of that day. The popular design of the Reformer's English writings, may, in part, explain this fact; but the fact could not have been realized, as we find it, without intention, nor without considerable study for the purpose. Wycliffe's Bible, as now issued from Oxford, with the valuable glossary appended to it, will form a conspicuous landmark in the history of our language,—the language spoken by the people who have given to the world a Shakespeare and a Milton, an Addison and a Burke.

It may seem scarcely reasonable to attempt any de-



scription of the *style* of an author who wrote, either in a dead language, or in one so little matured as was the language of England in the fourteenth century—and who was, moreover, so manifestly free from all thought about those artificial qualities in writing, in which excellence in this respect is made so largely to consist. In the age of Wycliffe, *conception* bore upon it, almost everywhere, the impress of a rough naturalness—*expression* still more so. But, in regard to style, nature often does with ease, what no amount of effort to *become* natural is found to be sufficient to realize. There is nothing like earnestness of purpose, to give clearness, terseness, and impressiveness to the language in which a man's thoughts and passions find their clothing and outlet. Wycliffe was intent on being understood—intent also on imparting the conviction and passion of his own mind to other minds. It is this which gives such distinctness and directness to his language as a popular teacher, and which often elevates his style into strains of high and prolonged eloquence. It is with this view also, that he frequently takes his illustrations from the common life, and the household experiences of the time, mingling much of the homely and graphic force of Latimer, with streams of passionate reasoning and rhetoric which remind us of Richard Baxter, more than of any other man in the history of our religious literature. Had he lived in our time, he would so have written as to have secured a place for his works in the libraries of statesmen and

divines, and also in the houses of the artizan and the peasant—and in all these connexions, his coming, in our day, as in his own, would probably have been the coming, not of peace, so much as of the sword.

It belonged to the wide compass of his genius and culture, that he should be capable of affecting minds thus widely separated from each other. It is a rare thing to find the recondite and the popular, the abstruse and the practical, the schoolman and the man of the world, so combined, as they manifestly were, in the great English Reformer. As a schoolman, even his enemies have assigned him a place with the most gifted and the most successful. On what this reputation was founded, his lectures at Oxford in part show; and his English sermons, and tracts, and treatises bring out the other phase of his power. His battle was with error in all connexions, and with depravity in all grades. To prove himself equal to the breadth of such a conflict, it became him to task his every capacity, and to avail himself of his every acquisition—and he did so. In his *Trialogus* alone, we see enough of the subtleties of the schoolman; and in such pieces as 'The Great Curse Expounded,' we discern how intimate in the mind of the Reformer was the relation between such subtleties, and the most momentous practical questions. Men may laugh at metaphysics, and count them an idle dream; but it is from the brain conversant with such studies, that those ideas go forth, which, in their time, prove

potent enough to shake churches and thrones to their foundations. Law, morality, and religion, have their root, not in physics, but in what lies beyond them. High conceptions on these subjects come from abstract thought, but they do not rest there. These ideas come into the world as it is, and mix themselves there with all concrete and practical matters, insisting on their right to determine what is just in the relations between governing and governed, between man and man, and between man and his Maker. The forge of the metaphysician is not like that of Vulcan, but it is much more mighty in producing instruments wherewith to put down one, and to set up another. In all history it has so been, and so it was conspicuously in the career of Wycliffe. His studies as a schoolman gave him the habits of thought which, as he passed into the actual world about him, fitted him for detecting the evils there as he would not otherwise have done ; and for committing himself to that skilful and thorough warfare against them which has given him his place in history. Common men might feel and deplore certain mischiefs which the church system of the times had brought upon them, but it was the scholar, and the man accustomed to abstract speculation only, who, in the manner of Wycliffe, could lay bare the false learning, and the false ethics, on which the system generating those mischiefs had been founded.

But we do not mean to say that we regard the logic of Wycliffe as at all times convincing. In his scholastic



reasonings, he sometimes assumes points as settled, which a modern disputant would by no means admit; and in his appeals to the people, he is often heedless of certain discriminations and exceptions, necessary to the best presentation of his case—brevity and directness being regarded as qualities essential to his purpose. Nor do we at all times see, even when his premises are sound, that the inferences he would deduce from them are entirely warranted. But, in the main, his reasoning is valid—valid often in substance when it is not so in form; and the marvel is, that having made his way to his opinions in so great a degree as the result of his own solitary thoughts, they should be found so rarely erroneous, and so far in advance, not only of his own age, but of the centuries which have since intervened.

It is observable in Wycliffe, that even when treading the most novel ground, there is rarely anything of hesitancy about his manner. He speaks as a man who is sure that he sees things as they are, and who has a right, accordingly, to speak of them as he does. Often his glance seems to penetrate to the very centre of long settled abuses, and as with the suddenness and the force of lightning, brings them rifted and crumbling to your feet. The errors and evils he condemns, are, in his view, so palpably errors and evils, that not to condemn them would be treason—treason against man and his Maker. No doubt, there may appear to us to be a great want of discrimination, of charity, and even of modesty, in such

a manner of proceeding. We may be prepared to say, that in what has continued long, there must have been good as well as evil ; that prejudice itself, though ill-founded, may be sincere, and even virtuous ; that in taking away the tares, it is not well to destroy the wheat along with them ; and that it is not in the best taste that a man who has signalized himself by his antagonism to a pretended infallibility, should thus virtually assume himself to be infallible. But it remains to be said on the other side, that old errors are rarely much affected by soft words ; that something of the good must often be hazarded, if the strength of evil is to be really broken ; that your mind of small scruples, can never be a mind of great power ; that men do little as reformers, who do their work by halves ; and that the men who have succeeded best in such efforts, have generally been men of a thorough dogmatic earnestness, the completeness of their reliance on the truthfulness of their own convictions, being the element of character necessary to their individual energy, and the effect of their example upon others. In the career of such men, even blindness in some things, and exaggeration in others, have had their uses.

The opinions which were thus confidently pronounced, have been largely expressed in the preceding pages. According to the doctrine of Wycliffe, the crown was supreme in authority, over all persons and possessions, within this realm of England—the persons of church-



men being amendable to the civil courts, in common with the laity; and the property of churchmen being subject to the will of the king, as expressed though the law of the land, in common with all other property.<sup>1</sup> Nor was it enough that he should thus preclude the papal court from all meddling with secular things in this

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<sup>1</sup> Wycliffe is accused of holding a doctrine, intitled—'Dominion founded in Grace.' The doctrine so described, may be stated in few words, and rightly understood, as it evidently was by Wycliffe, it is perfectly harmless. All men, through the fall, have forfeited the divine approval, and with that, all right to the possessions of this world, in common with all well-founded hope as to the possessions of a better world to come. In the case of those who avail themselves of the mediation of Christ—this lost right as to present and future good is, for his sake, restored; but all other men hold possession even of present things by the divine sufferance. Some doctrine to this effect has been commonly held by orthodox theologians. Wycliffe taught on this subject, only as Augustine had taught before him. But it remained for the calumniators of the English Reformer to push this tenet to what they were pleased to regard as its logical conclusion; and then to attribute that conclusion to him as his acknowledged doctrine. If, said they, the right to earthly things belongs thus exclusively to the children of grace, then these favoured persons may consistently, on that ground, resist all authority exercised by men who are not accounted as the subjects of that grace, and may deprive them of all their worldly goods. But, the doctrine of the Reformer—as to the authority of the magistrate, and as to the rights of property—is every where such as to demonstrate, that no such maniac notion as this *inference* from his doctrine presents, *could* ever have been arrived at by him. According to Dr. Lingard, the dogma thus imputed to Wycliffe, was a 'favourite maxim' in his system; but the fact is, that the speculation, whatever it may have included, is of the rarest occurrence in his writings. We know of but two or three instances in which any reference is made to it. Such indications of a want of candour and truthfulness, we regret to say, are of very common occurrence in the pages of Dr. Lingard.



English land. According to his ultimate doctrine, the pretence of the pontiff to exercise even spiritual jurisdiction over the church of England, as being himself the head of all churches, should be repudiated as an insolent and mischievous usurpation. The whole framework of the existing hierarchy, he describes as a device of clerical ambition, the first step in its ascending scale, the distinction between Bishop and Presbyter, being an innovation on the polity of the early church, in which the clergy were all upon an equality.

Concerning the sacraments, he retained the ordinance of baptism, but without receiving the doctrine of the church in respect to it, as being necessary in all cases to salvation. In like manner, he retained the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, but without the doctrine of transubstantiation, or of consubstantiation. Confirmation was, in his view, a custom originated by churchmen, to gratify their pride ; and penance was a usage which had come from the same quarter, and which had been constructed so as to minister to their covetousness. To the same effect does he express himself concerning the pretended sacrament of Orders, and of Extreme Unction. None of these services, he maintains, necessarily convey any beneficial influence, and all are disfigured by superstition, and fraught with delusion. On baptism, his expressions are at times obscure ; but, according to his general language, the value of a sacrament must depend wholly on the mind of the recipient, not at all on the external act

performed by the priest ; and, contrary to the received doctrine, he could not allow that infant salvation was dependant on infant baptism. To the last also, he believed in the existence of an intermediate state, and in the efficacy of prayer on the part of the living for souls in that state—but masses for the dead, he describes as a piece of priestly machinery, carefully adjusted with a view to gain ; insisting that the prayer of a layman, with regard to a departed soul, would be quite as efficacious as that of a priest, and that all prayer, whether by priests or laymen, must be valueless, if consisting in a mere repetition of forms, unaccompanied by faith or charity.

In harmony with these great principles in relation to priestly power, is the earnestness with which the Reformer exposes the utter nullity of church censures. The curse of God, it is affirmed, is never brought upon the innocent by such denunciations ; nor is the condition of the guilty in the slightest degree changed by them. The condition of man is not really affected, for the better or the worse, in this world or in the next, by anything that the priest may do in relation to him. It is the spiritual condition of the worshipper, as a responsible creature, and that alone, which determines his spiritual destiny.

So, according to the doctrine of Wycliffe, did the *priest* lose his *victim*, and *man* become *free*.

With these most unacceptable doctrines in relation

to the *power* of the priesthood, Wycliffe associated others, not a whit less obnoxious, concerning its *revenues* and *possessions*. The wealth of the clergy, and of the religious orders, he regarded as being, for the most part, ill-gotten, and ill-applied. Hence his solicitude that the civil power should be recognized as having supreme control over it. His interpretation of the sacramental theory, which asserted the spiritual condition of the laity to be independent in all respects of the offices of the clergy, swept away at once all the main sources of priestly revenue. Tithes, indeed, in so far as they might be exacted by law, remained ; but even in relation to them, the teachings of the Reformer were not a little alarming. According to the usage of the early church, payment, said Wycliffe, should be made to pious and useful priests, in sufficient amount to secure them suitable 'livelihood and clothing.' But only in relation to such priests, could obligation, even to that extent, be said to exist. Men withholding reasonable contribution from a pious priest, would be therein blameworthy, but not so blameworthy as the priest, who, while filling that office, should fail to preach the gospel to the people. In this manner, according to the theory of Wycliffe, the relation between priest and people, was purely moral, not at all political ; but that the civil power might deprive churchmen of their revenues, if proved to be habitually delinquent in the use of them, was a doctrine reiterated by him in every form of language.



Consonant with all this are the doctrines of the Reformer with regard to the sufficiency of Scripture ; the right of private judgment ; the duty of making the Scriptures accessible to the laity in their own tongue ; the efficiency of the atonement made by Christ, as the means of removing all sin in the case of the man trusting to it ; and also of the grace of the Holy Spirit, in sanctifying the soul, in the case of the man disposed to avail himself of that influence. So that while nothing was to be expected from the services of the priest, taken alone ; everything might be expected on the part of the worshipper, from his own faith, his own prayer, and his own well-directed effort.

It requires an intimate knowledge of the modes of thought prevalent in the eye of Wycliffe, and a considerable effort of imagination in relation to those times, to enable a man to discern thoroughly, the intelligence needed to separate thus between what was then established, and what ought to have come in its stead ; and to estimate fully, the courage which the man needed to bring to his enterprize, who resolved to avow the doctrines now stated, and to meet the consequences of so doing. Thoughts of this high and bold complexion had little or no place in the majority of minds in that age ; and to no mind did they present themselves with the distinctness, fulness, and reality, which characterizes them as given forth by Wycliffe. To him it pertained, that he should thus become the prophecy of a distant future,

and that he should be so convinced of the truthfulness of the opinions which gave him this position, as to be prepared to proclaim them aloud, unawed by any measure of probable or possible antagonism to be called forth by them. With the life of Wycliffe really before him, every man of sense must feel, that the charge of a deficiency in courage, as brought against the great English Reformer, is simply ridiculous. Profound sincerity only could have given him such convictions; and courage of the highest order, could alone have sustained him in making such open and continuous proclamation of them.

We should not omit to observe, that the patriotism and the piety of Wycliffe, evidently contributed, along with his intelligence and sincerity, to give this strength to his convictions, and this firmness to the course of action which resulted from them. In his case, the man did not disappear in the ecclesiastic—the patriot was not lost in the priest. In defending the English crown against the Papal crown; and in upholding the just authority of the magistrate in every relation; the words of the Reformer are ever those of the true Englishman, jealous as to the independence, ecclesiastical and civil, of his ‘puissant nation.’ That the king of England should acknowledge a superior in the man wearing the triple crown; that the clergy of England should refuse, on the ground of their relation to a foreign potentate, to render more than a partial obedience to their own; and that, on pleas of this nature, French popes and French cardinals should



be allowed to appropriate to themselves English benefices, and to enrich themselves with English treasure—these were all matters which never seemed to cross the mind of Wycliffe, without provoking his patriotism into an impassioned denunciation of them.

In judging concerning the piety of Wycliffe, it behoves us to view it, not so much in its relation to the nineteenth century, as in its relation to the fourteenth. That he should have given us, not merely the substance of evangelical truth, but that substance in the exact form and phrase in which it has been made familiar to ourselves, no man of liberal thinking would for a moment expect. The Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit—all the truths intended by these terms, were taught by him in such a manner, as to imply his thorough faith in the doctrine of Scripture as to the evil of sin; as to salvation being of grace, and as to the necessity of a renovated and holy life, in the case of all men who would be found at last to be Christians in reality, and not such merely in name. In his whole history, the Reformer is before us as a man convinced that the will of God, revealed to us through Christ, is the great rule—the rule at once of rectitude and goodness—to which the life of the good man should in all things be conformed. It is the strength of this conviction that gives so much earnestness to his censures in regard to the conduct of men who make light of the Divine precepts. Man should



*obey God*—he is in the world for that end, and what may follow in this world from his so doing is not to be with him any matter of calculation. So the Reformer taught, and so he acquitted himself. Hence that life of storm and suffering through which he lived ; in place of that life of quiet ease, or selfish pleasure, through which he *might* have lived. Wycliffe was truly a *believing* man—a man with whom the doctrines of the Bible were realities, and not fictions. He was, in consequence, a man of much prayer, of much converse with his Maker, gravely conscientious in his views of duty, and concerned, above everything, to be found doing the will of God in his generation, at whatever hazard by reason of the ungodliness so widely dominant among the men about him.

Under such influences, and to such ends, did Wycliffe prosecute his course to the close of the year 1384. He had then reached the sixtieth year of his age. But if life is to be measured by its labours and its deeds, the Reformer had lived a much longer life at that time than that number of years would indicate. Two years earlier, his health was so infirm, from an attack of paralysis, that he could honestly plead his weakness alone, as a sufficient reason for his not attempting a journey to Rome, in obedience to a citation from the Pontiff. His labours since that time, had been, as we have seen, most earnest and incessant. His enemies were observant of the fact that his power to do mischief would not proba-

bly be of long continuance, and appear to have been more reconciled on this account, than they would otherwise have been, to the adoption of a timid policy in relation to him.

On the twenty-eighth, or, as some say, on the twenty-ninth of December, while engaged in the service of the church at Lutterworth, he was seized with palsy, and on the thirty-first of that month he expired. It is within that old chancel, which is still standing, that this last sickness comes upon him. Through that low arched doorway, which still looks toward the spot on which the rectory-house then stood, we see him borne; and, after an interval of two or three days and nights, during which he does not speak, nor even seem to be conscious, all that was mortal of John Wycliffe, is left to receive the last offices from the hands of surviving friendship and affection. Some days later, his body is borne back to the interior of the old church, and, the usual ceremonies performed, it is dropped into the vault prepared for it within that narrow chancel, on the floor of which he had so often stood, the living teacher of a humble flock; and at the same time, as a man who had so moved the mind of his age, as to fill great churchmen with dismay, not excepting popes and conclaves.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix N. Walsingham, Hist. 312. et Hypodigma Neustræ. We have had to say the little that may be said in defence of the dogmatism, and the frequent severity of the language, observable in the writings of Wycliffe. The manner in which Walsingham com-

But to great men the grave is not oblivion,—is not silence. They speak from beyond it—act from beyond it. It was so with our great Proto-Reformer.

“ Of the book that had been a sealed up book,  
He tore the clasps, that the nation,  
With eyes unbandaged might thereon look,  
And learn to read salvation.

To the death 'twas thine to persevere,  
Though the tempest around thee rattled,  
And wherever Falsehood was lurking, there  
Thy heroic spirit battled.

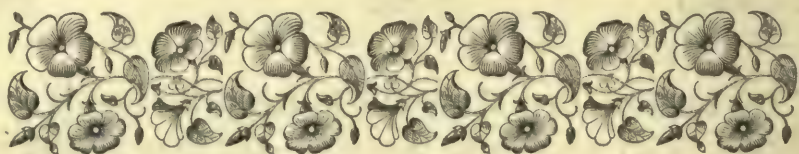
A light was struck—a light which shewed—  
How hideous were Error's features,  
And how perverted the law, bestowed  
By heaven to guide its creatures.

At first for that spark, amidst the dark,  
The friar his fear dissembled ;  
But soon at the fame of Wycliffe's name,  
The throne of St. Peter trembled.”

(Δ) MOIR.

ments on the character of Wycliffe, when making record of his decease, may suffice to show that the Reformer was a very moderate man in this respect, if compared with his assailants. ‘ On the Feast of the Passion of St. Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury—that organ of the devil—that enemy of the Church—that author of confusion to the common people—that idol of heretics—that image of hypocrites—that restorer of schism—that storehouse of lies—that sink of flattery—John Wycliffe, being struck by the horrible judgment of God, was seized with palsy, throughout his whole body; and continued to live in that condition until Saint Sylvester's day, on which he breathed out his malicious spirit into the abodes of darkness.’ After such a discharge of bile, we may hope that our amiable monk felt somewhat relieved.





## CHAPTER XIII.

### WYCLIFFE AND HIS SUCCESSORS.

**T**HE reign of Richard the Second began in 1377, and ended in 1399. The sway of the house of Lancaster, as represented by the three Henries, extends from 1399 to the middle of the next century. The rival claims of the house of York, are then put forth so far effectually, as to place Edward the Fourth, and Richard the Third, upon the throne. In 1485, a disastrous civil war is brought to a close, on the accession of Henry the Seventh, who, by his marriage, unites the claims of the two factions in his person. The reign of Henry the Seventh, brings us to the commencement of the century signalized as that of the great Protestant Reformation.

Richard the Second married Anne of Bohemia, who, in common with her attendants, sympathized with the doctrines of the Reformers, both in Bohemia, and in this

country. The influence of the queen, should, no doubt, be placed among the causes which disposed Richard to look with distrust on the adoption of harsh measures for the suppression of the new opinions. But in the eyes of the ruling churchmen, this hesitation in the king was a crime, and when the discontent generated by his imprudence, and, at length, by his evil deeds, seemed to be preparing the way for the accession of Henry the Fourth, Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was among the foremost in using his authority and influence in furtherance of that change.<sup>1</sup>

Henry the Fourth was the son of John of Gaunt, and cousin to Richard the Second. He became king of England, not by strict hereditary right, but by the success of his sword, followed by an act of the English Parliament. The clergy, as we have said, made themselves conspicuous in his favour; and in return, the new monarch pledged himself, in most explicit terms, to sustain the church in all her ancient rights and immunities.

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<sup>1</sup> Fuller notes this circumstance with his characteristic quaintness and honesty. 'The clergy were the first that led this dance of disloyalty. Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, made a sermon on Samuel's words—*Vir dominabitur populo*. He shewed himself a Latinist in the former part, a Parasite in the latter, a Traitor in both. He aggravated the childish weakness of Richard, and his inability to govern; magnifying the parts and perfections of Henry, Duke of Lancaster. . . . . And thus ambitious clergymen abuse the silver trumpets of the sanctuary, who, reversing them, and putting the wrong end into their mouths, make what was appointed to sound religion, to signify rebellion.' Church Hist: p. 153.

The mitre and the crown proved mindful of this compact. With change in the succession, came a marked change of policy in relation to the church and her assailants. The comparative freedom of the two preceding reigns, as regarded the publication of opinion, was followed by severities which were new in our history. The suspected were harassed, imprisoned—burnt alive !

Henry the Fifth, dissolute as a prince, became an orderly and self-governed soldier, as a king. He was brave, chivalrous, and too much occupied in studying the art of war, to concern himself greatly about anything beside ; least of all about questions in theology. He could no more understand why a layman should not be obedient to his priest in spiritual things, than he could understand why a soldier should not be obedient to his officer in military things. Authority in the church, was the same thing with him as authority at Westminster, or at Agincourt. He was prepared, accordingly, to sustain the coercive policy which had been originated by his father, and which had been so acceptable to the churchmen—his only wonder being, that any man of sense should feel the slightest difficulty about yielding the submission so demanded.

Henry the Sixth became a sovereign while an infant, and grew up under the regency of uncles. From education or temperament, he failed to evince the least sympathy with the military spirit which his father had done so much to diffuse among the English people. His dis-



positions were all of the description which incline toward domestic rather than public life. Thoughtful, virtuous, devout, he had no taste for entering the lists against any of the turbulent factions into the midst of which he was thrown ; and we see him pass, accordingly, from the hands of one party to those of another, as the scale of fortune oscillates between them.

The reigns of Edward the Fourth and of Richard the Third, were filled with plotting or with rebellion ; and when war ceased, on the accession of Henry the Seventh, it was that monarchical power might be consolidated, and that neither religious opinions, nor any other, that might give sanction to the least tendency towards further insubordination in church or state, should be allowed utterance.

Contemporary with this action and reaction, this progress of the reformed doctrines, and this resistance—this apparently successful resistance, to them, in England, was a similar course of things on the Continent. The court of Rome and the Emperor opposed themselves to Huss and Jerome, much as the English clergy and our Lancastrian princes opposed themselves to the disciples of Wycliffe. The principle of the opposition was in both cases the same, and in both cases the terrors of power *appeared* to have been wielded to the desired end. But this policy was not so wise in fact as in seeming. It did more to strengthen disaffection than to eradicate it. It forced upon multitudes the conviction, that a religious

authority which always appeals to force, and never to reason, must be an authority ill-founded; and it was while ecclesiastics were rejoicing in the sound of the retreating wave of the fifteenth century, that the next swell of the tide came, far mightier than the former, and swept one half of their domain away from them.

But how it fared with those who had to give forth their witnessing for human freedom and for God's truth through this dark and troubled interval—is an interesting inquiry, which must not be wholly overlooked in a work like the present.

The measures taken by the clergy, with the authority of the crown, during the interval now to be reviewed, and the reasons assigned in support of them, shew with sufficient clearness, that the discussions which were so rife during the latter half of the fourteenth century, had produced an impression on the mind of the English people, perceptible almost everywhere during the century which followed.

Soon after the death of Wycliffe, Richard the Second was induced to issue letters authorising proceedings against parties accused of Lollardism in Herefordshire, Northampton, Leicester, and other places. The delinquents who appear to have given most trouble to the inquisitors of heretical pravity in the diocese of Hereford, were three clergymen, named Stephen Ball, Walter Brute, and William Swinderby. From the large entries made in the register of Hereford, it is manifest that

these persons were all disciples of Wycliffe, and disciples not unworthy of their master. The effort made to silence them as preachers, are made on the ground that very many had become infected with their doctrine. The instrument sent to the Mayor of Northampton states, that three persons named, and especially one Woodward, a priest, had become notorious as the favourers of heresy and heretics ; and the records of the proceedings at Leicester, give us the names of many persons in that town, who were put upon their trial by the authorities delegated for that purpose. Of the men of Leicester, some are said to have abjured the opinions attributed to them ; but others were publicly excommunicated, and exposed to the grave penalties consequent on being so dealt with. The defence of the three Herefordshire clergymen was learned, able, and protracted ; and though some of the doctrines ascribed to them were disowned, so much was confessed as would have cost them their lives, had the prosecution against them taken place a few years later. The sentence passed on Swinderby is in the following words.—“ We do pronounce, decree, and ‘ declare the said William to have been, and to be, a ‘ heretic, schismatic, and a false informer of the people, ‘ and such as is to be avoided by faithful Christians.’ It was manifest in the course of these proceedings, that the parties who sympathized with the preaching of these heretics, were not only the poor, but included some of the most wealthy and influential persons ; and care was



taken by the Bishop of Hereford to warn all classes, in the most public and earnest manner, against listening to such teachers ; against being seen in any of their places of resort, or in any way showing them favour.<sup>1</sup> In 1388, licence was given to the Primate to institute the closest search after all books published by John Wycliffe, or his followers ; the persons convicted of having such books in their possession being made liable to imprisonment, and heavy penalties. Everywhere, in fact, the new thoughts and new feelings, which so much pains had been taken to diffuse, appear to have been seething strongly in the public mind.

In 1395, the boldness of the Reformers rose so high, that they presented a paper to parliament, in which all the more important doctrines broached by Wycliffe, were largely and openly enunciated, and prayer was made that the hierarchy might be reformed in accordance with the principles so avowed. The substance of this paper is—that the Church of England, since she began to dote on temporalities, after the example of Rome, her step-mother, has declined in faith, hope, and charity, and become infected with pride, and all deadly sin ; that priestly ordination, as commonly performed, is a human invention, and delusive, the gift of the Holy Ghost being restricted to spiritual men, and never conferred because a bishop affects to confer it ; that the professed celibacy of the

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<sup>1</sup> Foxe, *Acts and Mon* : I. 606—650.

clergy leads to every kind of sensuous wickedness, and that for this reason, all monasteries and nunneries should be dissolved ; that the doctrine of Transubstantiation, as commonly taught, includes the essence of idolatry, and would be wisely discarded, if the language of the Evangelical Doctor, in his Trialogus, were wisely considered ; that the practice of exorcising, and the customs relating to the consecration of places and things, savour more of necromancy, than of the gospel ; that the worldly offices of churchmen are assumed contrary to scripture, and to the injury of the church and state ; that prayer for the dead, if offered at all, should have respect to the departed generally, not to individuals ; in which case it might proceed from charity, and be acceptable to God, in place of being the work of a hireling, and as such valueless ; that auricular confession, and absolution, as now practised, lead to impurity, and subserve priestly domination ; that pilgrimages to images and relics are idolatrous, and a device of the clergy to keep the people in ignorance and delusion, and to augment their own wealth and power ; and that all aggressive wars, whether on the plea of conquest or religion, are contrary to the letter and spirit of the religion of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

In the conclusion of this paper, reference is made to a larger exposition and defence of its principles, which is presumed to be sufficiently known to be accessible to

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, Con. III. 221. Walsingham, 351. Foxe, I. 662.

any one who may desire to peruse it. The work adverted to, seems to be the treatise intitled, *Ecclesie Regimen*, several copies of which exist in manuscript. This work is supposed to have been written by Purvey, curate to Wycliffe at Lutterworth, but it is written as expressing the views known to be common to the Wycliffites at that time. It is an interesting document, and has been recently printed.<sup>2</sup>

In conjunction with the appearance of this treatise, and with the presenting of the petition of the Wycliffites to the commons, were other circumstances, which bespoke the prevalence and strength of the popular disaffection against the clergy. Placards were affixed to the doors of St. Paul's, and of Westminster Abbey, which censured in strong terms the worldly and sensuous lives of the clergy; and spoke of their exorbitant wealth, which had done so much to corrupt them, as wealth which they could never have acquired, except by means of their superstitious and false doctrine. In such a state of society, what comes thus to the surface, so as to be known to remote times, is little, compared with what lies beneath, finding no utterance, and soon to be forgotten.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Remonstrance against Romish Corruptions in the Church; addressed to the People and Parliament of England, in 1395, 18 Ric. II., now for the first time published. Edited by the Rev. J. Forshall, F.R.S., cro. 8vo. 1851.' The only sense in which this document can be said to have been 'addressed' to the parliament, is that suggested by the fact that the petition of the Wycliffites appears to refer to it.



If we feel disposed to censure the root and branch style of reform thus sought, it will behove us in fairness to remember, that the wealth of the clergy at this time, embraced more than half the knight's fees of England, that is, more than half the landed property of the country, exclusive of their personal property, and of their revenues from tithes, and from the discharge of their various offices towards the people.<sup>1</sup> There was no state of the realm, accordingly, so powerful as that constituted by the clergy. In point of wealth merely, and in respect to the influence which wealth never fails to take with it, they might have outweighed all the other estates put together. In this respect, England was at that time, what Spain has been in our own, and was menaced with the same social and religious evils, as the consequence. The clergy were not only possessed of this extraordinary power, they made the worst possible use of it, by upholding the grossest superstitions, and doing their best to crush all free thought, and to perpetuate every arbitrary principle in the administration of the church and the state. It was to put some check on this cormorant opulence, that the statute of Mortmain was passed. It was with this view also, that the statute against provisors was re-enacted, in terms more and more stringent, from time to time. But so insatiable were the passions of these men, that at

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<sup>1</sup> The knight's fees were 53,215, of which 28,000 were possessed by the clergy. Turner's Hist. Eng. III. 104.

this very time, Pope Boniface had sent two ecclesiastics to the English court, for the purpose of endeavouring to obtain a repeal of the statute against provisors, that so the wealth of the English church might be again laid open to spoliation by foreigners, after the pious usage of past days.<sup>1</sup> The fact is, that admitting the occasional excesses of these reformers, and the coarseness at times of their invectives, we may find no small excuse for them in these respects, in the colossal and foreboding nature of the evil to which they opposed themselves ; and may well feel, that we owe them a debt of gratitude which we shall never be able to repay.

But strong, in some respects, as the position of the English clergy in the fourteenth century seemed to be, it was not so strong as to secure them against all sense of danger. Supposing them to have been persuaded that the substance of their doctrines was true, and that the substance of their claims was valid, there was much in their enormous wealth, and in the worldliness, and something more than worldliness, which their wealth had contributed to foster, that could not fail to be seen as exposing them to not a little dangerous criticism, and as giving their enemies a strong vantage-ground from which to assail them. It is manifest that their leaders so felt, as the pasquinades on the doors of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and those free speeches in the House of

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<sup>1</sup> Remonstrance against Romish Corruptions. Pref. viii.

Commons in support of the Wycliffite petition, called forth the sympathizing merriment and talk, not only of the common people, but of many among the most grave and sagacious in that generation. Richard was at this time in Ireland, engaged in subduing certain malcontents of that kingdom. But special messengers were despatched, urging his immediate return, to protect the church against the innovators. The king made his appearance speedily in the metropolis, and having assured the alarmed prelates of his purpose to sustain their cause, he sent for some of the more conspicuous patrons of the Wycliffites, and strongly censured the course they had taken. Among the persons to whom this reprimand was addressed, were Sir Lewis Clifford, Sir John Latimer, Sir Richard Sturry, and Sir John Montague.<sup>1</sup>

The papal envoys, Francis e Cappanago, and Thomas, Bishop of Novara, in place of having to report to his holiness that the statute against provisors had been repealed, had to make known to the papal court the signs of disaffection to the Holy See among the English, which had thus come before them. These communications called forth letters from Boniface to the prelates, and to the king, full of lamentations and displeasure. The pontiff deplores, in common with all Christendom, that heresy should so far have infected the English people ; and that through the neglect of the authorities,

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<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, 251. Foxe, I. 664.



in church and state, it should still be found increasing, numbering among its adherents men of learning, and a multitude of the common people, so that men not only presumed to preach, and otherwise to publish doctrines subversive of all authority, civil and religious, but that even in the English Parliament persons could be found so far insensible to the respect due to their position as to uphold and commend such opinions. The Archbishops and Bishops of England were, accordingly, admonished, that this guilty sloth must come to an end, and that their utmost effort must be made to 'root out and destroy' all such as refused to abandon the snare of Satan. The king is also exhorted to see that needful assistance for this purpose be given to the clergy by all magistrates, that so offenders may be everywhere imprisoned, brought to trial, and made to undergo their merited punishment.

But Richard was not the man to give himself to a strong and steady policy in favour of the clergy—especially in the face of the difficulties from other quarters which such a policy would have entailed upon him. His disposition and his circumstances, dictated a middle course; but as regards the prelates, if they did no more towards the suppression of heresy, we have good reason to believe that it was simply because the power to do more had not been ceded to them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foxe, I. 657, 658. In obedience to the admonition thus addressed to the English clergy, Archbishop Arundel convened a council in

The accession of Henry the Fourth was favoured, rather than impeded, by the Reformers. He was not only the son of John of Gaunt; but had been known to express sentiments, as Earl of Derby, in respect to the wealth and power of the clergy, in harmony with those uttered by his father when he stood forth as the patron of Wycliffe in St. Paul's.<sup>1</sup> But on ascending the throne, Henry, as we have seen, began to look on the support of the clergy as necessary to the stability of his power; and it was no secret, that the only peace-offering which could ensure him service from that quarter, was the sacrifice of the Wycliffites. He knew the price—he promised that it should be paid. But to secure the good offices of the priesthood was not to gain every thing. By placing himself in such hands, Henry arrayed against him all who were intent, whether from political or religious reasons, on diminishing that priestly wealth and priestly power, which threatened to absorb all other wealth and all other power. The existing relations of things in this respect were most unnatural, and the chance of perpetuating them depended on the power to stay the progress of intelligence. To so great a hazard did the policy of Henry expose his crown, and the dynasty he sought to

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London in the following year, in which eighteen articles selected from the *Dialogus* of Wycliffe were condemned. Labbe, *Concilia*, VII. 1923. Woodford's *Adversus Johannem Wiclifum*, consists of a professed refutation of these eighteen articles. Brown's *Fasciculus Rerum*, II. 190, *et seq.* <sup>1</sup> Hall's Chron. 16.



establish. It was both an error and a crime, and the fruit natural to it followed. His own reign was short and troubled; and that of his son added so far to the evils thus produced, as to prepare the way for a transfer of the sceptre to other hands in the time of his successor.

But this future concerning his house, was neither foreseen nor suspected by the king. When his first parliament assembled, he sent the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland as his Commissioners to the clergy assembled in convocation, who, in the name of the king, assured them, their presence there was not, as in preceding reigns, to demand subsidies, but to solicit an interest in their prayers, and to state that the clergy would find their sovereign prepared to take all necessary measures to sustain the liberties of the church, and to destroy, as far as possible, all errors, heresies, and heretics.<sup>1</sup> In pursuance of this pledge, two years later, the infamous statute for the burning of heretics was passed.<sup>2</sup>

This instrument commences with reciting the complaints so often made about persons who gave themselves to preaching without licence from the proper authorities; who retained possession of heretical books, convened unlawful assemblies, and diffused, in many ways, the most pestilent opinions. Against these disorders it is provided, that no man shall preach, from this

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, III. 237—245.

<sup>2</sup> Stat. 2 Hen. IV. c. 15. Rot. Parl. III. 467.



time forth, who is not duly authorized ; that within the next forty days, all books containing doctrines at variance with the determinations of the church shall be delivered to the ecclesiastical officers ; that all persons suspected of offence in these respects, or of being present at prohibited meetings, or as in any way favouring such meetings, or the errors taught in them, shall be committed to the bishop's prison, to be there dealt with at his pleasure, during a space not exceeding three months ; and if such persons shall fail to clear themselves from the charges brought against them, or shall not abjure their errors if convicted, or shall relapse into error after such abjuration, then the local officers, both civil and clerical, shall confer together, ' and sentence being duly pronounced, the magistrate shall take into hand the persons so offending, and any of them, and cause them to be burned, in the sight of all the people, to the intent that this kind of punishment may be a terror to others, that the like wicked doctrine, and heretical opinions, and the authors or favourers of them, may not be any longer maintained within the realm.' The pretence of the Romanist, that this practice of burning heretics belongs, not to the law of the church, but to the common law of Europe, is not honest. According to the language of this statute, it is the canon law that determines what the offences are which shall be followed by delivering of the offender to the secular arm for such punishment, and it rests with the clergy to interpret that law.

This atrocious statute was put into speedy execution. William Sawtre, a clergyman in the diocese of Norwich, had embraced the doctrines of Wycliffe; but on his first examination had abjured them. Subsequently Sawtre again broached some of the prohibited dogmas, especially in relation to the Eucharist, and he was accordingly sentenced by archbishop Arundel to be delivered to the secular power as a relapsed heretic. The king issued the warrant for his execution: he died, according to John Foxe, 'a true and faithful martyr;' and thus the custom of burning for heresy had beginning in our history.<sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned, that with this power to put other men to death for alleged errors of opinion, the clergy obtained from Henry the fourth a law by which their own order ceased to be amenable to the secular tribunals.<sup>2</sup> We have seen with what earnestness, not only Wycliffe and the reformers, but our race of English kings, had resisted all pretension to such immunity on the part of churchmen.

By these proceedings the king drew upon himself all those disaffections which had served to place so large a portion of his subjects, of every rank, in a position of antagonism to the ruling churchmen, and to the papacy. Placards were posted on church-doors, and elsewhere, denouncing him as a perjured tyrant and usurper. Even

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, III. 459. Foxe, I. 671—675.

<sup>2</sup> Rot. Parl. III. 494.



the death of his predecessor was laid to his charge. Disaffected barons, and persecuted Wycliffites, were prepared to act in league against him. He was soon obliged to unsheathe the sword in defence of his crown, and he never ceased to find assailants of his policy within the walls of parliament. In the fourth year of his reign, the commons petitioned that every benefice should have a perpetual incumbent ; that all persons preferred to benefices should reside upon them ; that the priories in the hands of foreigners should be seized ; that no Frenchman who had taken the vows of a monk should remain in the kingdom ; that the clergy and the religious orders should be required to do hospitality from their revenues ; and that no youth under the age of twenty-one should be received into any of the four orders of friars.<sup>1</sup> When the next parliament assembled, an attempt was made by the chancellor to repress this innovating spirit, by stating in behalf of the king, that it was the royal pleasure that the church should be maintained in all its liberties and immunities, as in the time of his predecessors,—every kingdom being like the human body, possessing a right side, which consists of the church, and a left, which consists of the temporal powers, the commonalty being as the remaining members.<sup>2</sup> The king who could play the sycophant to a priesthood after this manner, and to such a priesthood as then flourished in this country, ceased, of

<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. III. 499.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. III. 522.



necessity, to be an object of affection or esteem among his subjects. The reply of the commons to the language that had been addressed to them, was in the shape of a petition praying the monarch to remove his confessor, and two other persons, from his household. Henry felt that his attempt to awe the reformers by high talk had not been successful, and he not only assented to the petition, but added that he was prepared to displace any other parties whose presence near his person may have been displeasing to his people. Nothing, he assured his faithful commons, was more an object of solicitude with him, than to reign as a good king; and he proceeded so far as to invite them to lay freely before him whatever measures should appear to them as likely to conduce to the honour of God, and the welfare of the state. They prayed that in the settling of his household, the persons selected should be persons of good reputation, and that the appointments made should be notified to them; and in the next session they proceeded so far as to urge that he should provide for the expenses of his estate from his own resources. To the first of these requests the king readily assented; and even on the latter point he would be found to do as desired so soon as convenient.<sup>1</sup> It must have been an uneasy throne which could be retained only by such means.

But the reforming spirit of the commons carried them still further. They did not scruple to make it a matter

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. III. 525—549.

of complaint to the king that the clergy should be allowed to luxuriate at home, while the knights of the kingdom impoverished their families, and imperilled their lives, to defend him against his enemies. The Archbishop of Canterbury said, in reply, that the clergy paid their tenths more frequently than the laity paid their fifteenths; that they sent their tenants to join the royal standard whenever required so to do; and that they were themselves doing him no mean service, by saying masses and prayers, day and night, in his favour. The speaker, it is said, expressed himself sneeringly about the value which the primate appeared to attach to the *spiritual* contributions of his order—whereupon the prelate threw himself at the feet of the king, imploring him to use his authority for the protection of the Church, declaring himself willing to encounter any danger, from fire or sword, rather than see the church bereft of the smallest portion of her right. But the commons were not to be diverted from their course by these passionate proceedings. They presented, ere long, a statistical paper to the king, in which they made it appear, that from the temporal possessions of the prelates, the abbots, and the priors, there should be contributed to the service of the crown, beyond the force usually supplied from that source, no less than thirteen earls, fifteen hundred knights, and six thousand two hundred esquires! But the fortunes of the king were in a somewhat improved condition at this



juncture : he could afford to show himself displeased with these troublesome researches, and he did so. Discouraged in this attempt to show that the clergy were not bearing their proportion of the public burdens, the commons directed their artillery to another point, and prayed that all ecclesiastics might be placed in subjection, as heretofore, to the lay tribunals ; and when in 1410 another Wycliffite was committed to the flames, they called loudly for the repeal of the brutal law which had legalized such cruelty. To the former demand, the king did not assent, to the latter he assented in part.<sup>1</sup>

While the reformers in parliament employed themselves after this manner, the prelates were assiduous in their endeavours to strengthen themselves in the more favourable position which new circumstances had assigned to them. In a convocation of the clergy in Oxford, in 1408, a series of 'constitutions,' attributed to Archbishop Arundel, were adopted, which point distinctly enough to the source from which we have to trace the statute for the burning of heretics. In these articles it is declared, that the pontiff, as holding the keys of future life and death, is to us, not in the place of man, but in the place of God ; that the guilt of those persons, accordingly, who question his decisions, is the guilt of spiritual rebellion and sacrilege ; that in the persons who have presumed to oppose themselves of

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<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, 414—421. Rot. Parl. III. 623.



late years in this country, to the authority of the Holy See, it is not difficult to discern the tail of the black horse in the Apocalypse, notwithstanding the appearances of great sanctity assumed by them; that to bring the heresies and mischiefs which have been so long tolerated in the land to an end, it is expedient to determine: That no man shall in future attempt to preach without the license of his ordinary; that preaching shall be restricted in all cases to the simple matters prescribed in the instruction provided in aid of the ignorance of priests, and beginning *ignorantia sacerdotum*; that any man offending against this rule shall forfeit his temporalities, and be liable to the penalty awarded in the recent statute against heresy; that any church into which a teacher of this description is admitted shall be laid under an interdict; that no schoolmaster shall mix religious instruction with the teaching of youth, nor permit discussion about the sacraments, nor the reading of the scriptures in English; that all books of the kind written by John Wycliffe, and others of his time, or hereafter to be written, be banished from schools, halls, and all places whatsoever; that no man shall hereafter translate any part of scripture into English, on his own authority, and that all persons convicted of making or using such translations, shall be punished as favourers of error and heresy; that no man shall be allowed to dispute concerning the decrees of the church, whether given in her general or in her provincial

councils, nor to take exception to the customs so authorized, such as pilgrimage to shrines, adoration of images, or of the cross, on pain of being accounted heretical; that all possible means be used to root out the heresies known under the 'new and damnable name of Lollardy,' as everywhere, so especially in the University of Oxford, once so famous for its orthodoxy, but of late so poisoned with false doctrines; and, finally, inasmuch as the crime of heresy is more enormous than treason, since it is resistance to the authority of heaven as present in the church, all persons suspected of this offence, and refusing to appear before the proper authorities when cited, shall, though absent, be adjudged guilty.<sup>1</sup>

Our devout martyrologist closes his account of this significant document by observing. 'Who would have thought, by these laws and constitutions so substantially founded, so circumspectly provided, so diligently executed, but that the name and memory of this persecuted sect should have been utterly rooted up, and never could have stood! And yet, such be the works of the Lord, passing all man's admiration, that notwithstanding all this, so far was it off that the number and courage of these good men were indeed vanquished, that they rather *multiplied daily*, especially in London, and Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Herefordshire, in Shrewsbury, in Calais, and divers other quarters.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Labbe, *Concilia*, VII. 1935—1948.

<sup>2</sup> Foxe, *Acts and Mon.* 1. 986, 687.



The reader who would form a just conception as to the nature of the examinations to which the suspected in such places were subjected, should read the trial of the 'poor priest' William Thorpe, before archbishop Arundel, as given from his own narrative by Tyndale and Foxe.<sup>1</sup> The examination of Thorpe took place in 1407, when he was remanded to prison, where it is probable he died. The alternate browbeating and coaxing, denunciation and flattery, to which the poor man was exposed, both from the primate of all England, and from his coadjutors, presents a scene full of significance.

We have said that a second Lollard was burnt during the reign of Henry the fourth. This person was John Badby, a mechanic in the diocese of Worcester. Badby had embraced the doctrine of Wycliffe concerning the Eucharist. He maintained that the material bread remains in that sacrament, after the utterance of the words of consecration by the priest. In its *nature* it remains bread, it is only in a *sacramental* sense that it can be said to be the body of Christ. When examined in Worcester, his answer was, that he could not believe otherwise, and that it would be in vain to expect him to profess a faith he did not hold. He was removed to London, and again examined by Archbishop Arundel, and other prelates,—but with the same result. Prince Henry was present when this man was brought to the stake in Smithfield. The

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<sup>1</sup> Acts and Mon. I. 693—708.



prince urged him to recant, and cautioned him against supposing that anything short of his so doing could save him from the death immediately before him. Badby could only repeat to the prince, what he had said to the prelates. Being fastened to a stake, a barrel was placed so as to encircle him, and the interior was filled from above and beneath with faggots. As the fire began to do its office, the sufferer uttered in his prayer, the words—Mercy, Lord, mercy ! The prince interpreted those words as expressing willingness to recant, and order was immediately given that the fuel should be removed. But the sufferer repeated that his faith was unchangeable, and that he must profess what he believed. The prince moved, it would seem, with pity toward him, pledged himself to make ample provision for him during the remainder of his days, if he would only be obedient to the church. But it availed not. The humble mechanic could not accept even of a prince's patronage, at the cost of truth ; and the fire being again kindled, he expired amidst the torture inflicted by it.

The disciples of Wycliffe were thus precluded from the hope of better days, even though the sceptre should pass from the dishonoured hand which signed the statute for the burning of heretics, to that of the heir-apparent. Badby perished in 1409. Henry the fifth ascended the throne in 1413. It was well known at that time that the patrons of the Wycliffites included persons of rank in both

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, Con. III. Foxe, I. 679—682. Ex Regist. Arundel.

houses of parliament, and near the person of the king. The Earl of Salisbury, for example, is described by Walsingham, as a despiser of the canons, as one who laughed at the sacraments, and as a 'fautor' of the Lollards through his whole life.<sup>1</sup>

But one man there was who had incurred the special resentment of the clergy, not only as having defended some of the most obnoxious tenets of Lollardism in the English parliament, but as being known to have given his aid to certain preachers of that sect. This man was Lord Cobham, who, as Sir John Oldcastle, had been the companion of the king when prince Henry, and had distinguished himself as a soldier. The preachers now favoured by him are said to have made the diocese of the bishop of London, and those of the bishops of Rochester and Hereford, the principal scene of their itinerant labours. In addition to which, the wealth of this offender had been freely expended in multiplying copies of the writings of Wycliffe, and by this means the seeds of disaffection had been scattered more widely, not only in England, but through Bohemia, and other states of the Continent. All this too had been done, in the face of the policy which had doomed the preachers so encouraged, and the writings so diffused, to become fuel of the same fire.

The English clergy appear to have judged, that the

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<sup>1</sup> Hist. 404.



time had now come in which bolder steps should be taken to protect the church against the dangers to which it was thus exposed.

Accordingly, in a meeting of the clergy, over which Archbishop Arundel presided, it was determined that a prosecution of Lord Cobham should be immediately commenced. But it was suggested that proceedings in the case should be stayed, until it should have been laid before the king, and the mind of the sovereign concerning it ascertained. A deputation was in consequence appointed. Henry expressed his disapprobation of the opinions, and of the conduct, attributed to Lord Cobham, and promised to expostulate with him on the subject, adding that should this milder method be without effect, the case should be left to the wisdom of the church. The knight listened to his sovereign with respect, and the following has descended to us as the substance of his answer.—“I am, as  
‘ I have always been, most willing to obey your majesty  
‘ as the minister of God, appointed to bear the sword of  
‘ justice, for the punishment of evil doers, and the protection of those who do well. To you, therefore, next  
‘ to my eternal living Judge, I owe my whole obedience,  
‘ and entirely submit, as I have ever done, to your pleasure, my life and all my fortune in this world, and in all  
‘ affairs of it whatever, am ready to perform exactly your  
‘ royal commands. But as to the pope, and the spiritual  
‘ dominion which he claims, I owe him no service, that  
‘ I know of, nor will I pay him any ; for as sure as God’s



‘ word is true, to me it is fully evident, that he is the  
‘ great Antichrist, the son of perdition, the open adver-  
‘ sary of God, and the Abomination standing in the holy  
‘ place.<sup>1</sup>

Henry was sorely displeased that neither his condescension nor his reasoning could bring his faithful soldier to avow a return to orthodoxy ; and abandoned by the king, Lord Cobham was left to contend alone with his clerical adversaries. His home was in Cowley Castle, about three miles from Rochester, not long since the residence of his father-in-law. He was cited to appear before the clergy, but disregarded the summons. His prosecutors implored the aid of the secular arm to secure his apprehension, as ‘ the seditious apostate, ‘ schismatic, and heretic, the troubler of the peace, the ‘ enemy of the realm, the adversary of all holy church.’

Cobham now made a second appeal to the justice of the king, but from the royal presence the ecclesiastical officers were allowed to conduct him to the Tower. After some days, he was brought before the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of London and Winchester, and others, in the chapter-house of St. Paul’s. Arundel urged submission ; Cobham replied that his opinions were unalterable, and prayed that he might be allowed to read from a paper which he held in his hand, an

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<sup>1</sup> Wake’s State of the Church. *ubi supra*.

expression of his sentiments on the points concerning which he presumed himself to be suspected of error. This paper had reference chiefly to the doctrine of the Eucharist, to the nature of penance, the worship of images, and the custom of pilgrimage, and was, with some additional explanations, the copy of a document which he had recently presented to the king. On all the points mentioned, the sentiment and the language of this confession were in substance those of Wycliffe. By the prelates it was described as being in some respects orthodox, in others as requiring further explanation, while there were some points not included in it, on which the opinions of the accused must be ascertained. But Cobham declined giving any further answer than was contained in the paper which he had read—‘You see me in your power, do with me as you please,’ were his words. Arundel was perplexed by this conduct; but presently admonished his victim, that the matters to be believed by all Christians had been placed beyond controversy by the authority of the Church, and that on the following Monday, when he would be expected to appear again before them, more explicit answers must be given. Care also would be taken, in the interval, to make him acquainted with the judgment of the church on the questions at issue. On the morrow, a paper was placed in his hands which affirmed, in the strongest terms, and in the name of the church, the necessity of confession to a priest, the merit of pilgrimages, the

propriety of the worship rendered to images and holy relics ; also the supremacy of the pope, and the mysteries of transubstantiation.

On the Monday, Cobham appeared before a formidable array of judges, in the monastery of the Dominicans, near Ludgate. Beside the prelates, the doctors, and the heads of religious houses, included in this assembly, was 'a great sort more, of priests, monks, canons, friars, 'parish-clerks, bell-ringers, and pardoners,' who are described as treating the 'horrible heretic with innumerable mocks and scorns.' It is clear also, from the record of the proceedings, that besides the ecclesiastics, and the hangers-on of that order, there was a large gathering of people from the city.

Arundel again expressed himself as willing to forgive the past, on condition of a promise of submission for the future ; but Cobham replied that while his conscience accused him of having offended grievously against God, during some past years of his life, he knew of nothing he had done against the archbishop of Canterbury that might call for the exercise of forgiveness towards him in that quarter. With a burst of feeling, he threw himself upon his knees, and implored the Divine mercy on account of the evils of his past life ; and rising from that posture, with tears in his eyes, he addressed the people present in the following prophetic terms. 'Lo ! 'good people, lo ! for the breaking of God's law and 'commandments, these men never cursed me. But for



‘the sake of their own law and traditions, most cruelly  
‘do they handle both me and other men. Both they,  
‘therefore, and their laws, according to the promise  
‘of God, shall be utterly destroyed.’ The firmness of  
his adversaries, we are told, was somewhat disconcerted  
by this manifestation of feeling and fearlessness.

A lengthened discussion now took place, to which  
the archbishop, the doctors, and the leaders of the  
religious orders, brought all their learning, their acute-  
ness, and their passions, each shaping his pressing ques-  
tions so as best to ensnare and overpower the accused.  
On being required to answer distinctly, whether the  
bread remained in the sacrament of the altar, after the  
words of consecration were pronounced—Cobham re-  
plied that it did so remain; and a smile we are told  
then passed over the countenance of his opponents, it  
being concluded that ‘the people would now see him  
‘to be taken in a great heresy.’ Still pressed with  
inquiries on this subject, and about church authority,  
he said. ‘My belief is, as I said before, that all the  
‘scriptures of the sacred book are true. All that is  
‘grounded upon them, I believe, thoroughly, for I know  
‘it is God’s pleasure that I should do so. But in your  
‘lordly laws and idle determinations I have no belief.  
‘For ye are no part of Christ’s holy church, as your  
‘open deeds do show, but ye are very antichrists,  
‘obstinately set against his holy law and will. The  
‘laws which ye have made are nothing to his glory,

‘but wholly to your own vain glory and covetousness.’ We marvel not that such language should have been loudly denounced as ‘exceeding heresy.’ Thomas Walden, a Carmelite, and a well-known antagonist of Wycliffe, said, that to affirm of any person, and especially of superiors, that they are no part of holy church, must be presumption; according to the maxim, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” But it was retorted, ‘Christ said also in the self-same chapter of Matthew, that like as the evil tree is known by its fruits, so is a false prophet by his works, but that text ye left behind ye.’ Concerning this, and other apt citations of Scripture, the same opponent observed. — ‘Ye make here no difference between the evil judgments which Christ hath forbidden, and the good judgments which he hath commanded. Rash judgment, and right judgment, all is one with you, such swift judges ever are these learned scholars of Wycliffe.’ ‘Well indeed have ye sophistered,’ was the reply, ‘preposterous ever more are *your* judgments. For as the prophet Isaiah saith, ye judge evil good, and good evil, and therefore, that same prophet concludeth that your ways are not God’s ways. And as for that virtuous man Wycliffe, before God and man, I here profess that, until I knew him and his doctrines, that ye so lightly disdain, I never abstained from sin; but since I have learnt from him to fear my God, I trust it has been otherwise with me. So much grace could I never

‘ find in all *your* glorious instructions.’ Here the Carmelite became angry, and said, ‘ It were not well ‘ with me that in an age so supplied with teachers and ‘ examples, I should find no grace to amend my life, ‘ until I heard the Devil preach.’ ‘ Precisely thus,’ it was answered, ‘ did the Pharisees before you, imputing the ‘ doctrine and miracles of Christ to the agency of Beelzebub : this temper in the church has come to her ‘ from the venom of Judas.’ The archbishop inquired what that venom meant, and the answer was, ‘ Your possessions and lordships.’ These things, it was added, have made Rome ‘ the very nest of Antichrist, out of ‘ which come all the disciples of Antichrist, of whom ‘ prelates, priests, and monks, are the body, and these ‘ friars the tail. Priests and deacons, for the preaching ‘ of God’s word and the administering of sacraments, ‘ with provision for the poor, are indeed grounded on ‘ God’s law, but these other sects have no manner of ‘ support thence, as far as I have read.’ It was now manifest that nothing but evil could result from protracting this discussion, and the archbishop hastened to admonish the prisoner, that the day waned, that great forbearance had been shown towards him in vain, and that his only way of escape from the most serious penalties, would be in the required submission to the authority of the church. The answer was, ‘ My mind is unalterable, do with me as you please.’

The archbishop then rose, the clergy and the laity



did so, and stood uncovered, while sentence was pronounced on 'Sir John Oldcastle, knight, and Lord of Cobham, as a most pernicious and detestable heretic.' By this sentence, all persons were prohibited from rendering either counsel or help to the offender, on pain of incurring the censures denounced against the favourers of heretics. It was also provided, that this sentence should be published in the mother tongue, from the pulpits of every diocese throughout the province of Canterbury.

In this proceeding, the passions of the clergy appear to have hurried them somewhat beyond their discretion. Heretical opinions could not have been avowed more decidedly, or more notoriously, than by Lord Cobham. Nevertheless, a considerable interval passes, and the sentence of the law remains unexecuted. At length, whether by connivance, or by his own ingenuity, the prisoner escapes from the Tower, and, embarking under the cover of the night, finds an asylum, first in the house of a partizan near St. Alban's, and subsequently in Wales.

The trial of Lord Cobham took place in September 1413, and in the January following, came the alleged insurrection of the Lollards. Arbitrary governments always know how to profit by a frustrated conspiracy. Accordingly, if a god-send of this sort should not happen to come of itself in the fitting season, such rulers generally know how to provide that it shall come. When the 'poor priest,' William Thorpe, was in prison, a man was allowed to visit him under the pretence of being a

Wycliffite in search of spiritual guidance, and when this miscreant deposed against the prisoner the things he had drawn from him by his means, Arundel and his coadjutors, not only admitted this evidence, but refused to confront the accuser with the man upon whom he had practised this deceit. Men who could descend to such expedients, were manifestly capable of descending to anything in the scale of meanness or fraud, and would be ready to employ spies for the purpose of getting up a conspiracy at any moment, and to any extent, that might seem to promise a furtherance of their policy.

Walsingham, the most bitter enemy of the Lollards, is our chief authority in relation to this pretended rebellion. The substance of his statement is,—that reports were spread that the Lollards were engaged in a plot to destroy the king and his brothers at Eltham; that the king being apprised of their object, removed from Eltham to Westminster; that on the night of the seventh of January, the Lollards were assembling in great numbers in a field near St. Giles,' and were about to act, at a given hour, under their leader Oldcastle; that the king *then* ordered his friends to arms, and informed them that they must proceed with him at once to this reported place of rendezvous; that he was urged to wait until he had collected a more adequate force, or at least not to expose himself to the possible odds arrayed against him before day-break; that Henry would not listen to such counsel, because *he had heard* that

the Lollards intended to burn Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, St. Alban's, and all the other priories in London ; that the king therefore went to St. Giles' in the middle of the night, where he found *a few persons only*, who, on being asked what they wanted, said, 'The Lord Cobham ;' that these persons were seized and imprisoned ; that great surprise was felt that *no one* came from the city to join them ; that the king ordered the city-gates to be shut and guarded ; and that it was *reported*, that if the king had not thus anticipated the scheme of the traitors, fifty thousand servants and apprentices *would have been* concentrated at this place of meeting.

One of the most dispassionate and honest of our historians, on reviewing this narrative, justly says,—“ It ‘ is a series of *supposition, rumour, private information, apprehension, and anticipation*. That the king was acted ‘ upon by some secret agents is clear, that the plots ‘ asserted were really formed *there is no evidence*. The ‘ possibility is, that Henry's generous and lofty mind was ‘ found to start at the violences which the bigotry of the ‘ papal clergy had resolved upon, and that artful measures ‘ were taken to alarm it into anger and cruelty, by charges ‘ of treason, rebellion, and meditated assassination.’<sup>1</sup>

But whatever may have been the nature of the meeting in St. Giles', whether originated wholly by the

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<sup>1</sup> Turner's History of England, II. 452, 453. Walsingham, 431, 432. Wilkins, Concil. III. 358—360. Foxe, I. 765—772.



enemies of the Lollards ; or consisting of some harmless gathering, of which the clergy became aware, and which sufficed as a ground for this cry of treason, and for these manifestly false rumours—the effect of the incident was eminently of the sort desired. Some of the men apprehended were executed. Lollardy was more than ever identified with treason, both in the public mind and in the law of the land. Ministers of state, and magistrates, were required to make oath to exercise their authority for the suppression of this sect ; and Lord Cobham, apprehended three years later, was sentenced to perish at the stake.

At the place of execution, Cobham renewed his exhortations to the people to follow their priests only as their life and doctrine should be conformable to the word of God. The proffered services of a confessor he declined, adding that his confessions of sin were made to God only ; and while the surrounding clergy warned the spectators against praying for the sufferer, because manifestly condemned of heaven, Cobham, in the spirit of a better faith, was heard interceding aloud for the salvation of his persecutors. So perished the man ‘whose virtue,’ to use the language of Horace Walpole, ‘made him a reformer ; whose valour made him a martyr.’ The sentence passed upon him was, that he should be hung in chains as a traitor, and at the same time slowly consumed to ashes as a heretic ; upon which Fuller remarks—‘As his body was hanged and burnt in an un-

‘usual posture at Tyburn, so his memory hath ever been  
‘in a strange suspense between malefactor and martyr;  
‘papists charging him with treason against King Henry  
‘the fifth, and heading an army of more than ten  
‘thousand men; though it wanted nine thousand, nine  
‘hundred and ninety-nine thereof, so far as it appears  
‘solidly proved.’<sup>1</sup>

But the churchmen had now reached their season of ascendancy. Even the right of sanctuary, ceded to the murderer, was denied, by an act of parliament, to men charged with the crime of reading the Scriptures in English; and so serious were the confiscations of property that took place in London and elsewhere, on such pretences, that the king found it necessary to interpose, threatening all functionaries who should be convicted of proceeding vexatiously in such cases with heavy penalties. This fact, and even the exaggerations of Walsingham concerning the numbers said to have been assembled, or to have been prepared to assemble, in St. Giles’s, to meet Lord Cobham, combine to suggest that it must have been notorious at this time, that the mind of the people of England, especially in the cities and towns, was deeply leavened with that new feeling which the labours of Wycliffe had been the means of diffusing.

While the struggle between the Church and the reformers took this course in England, affairs were not sta-

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<sup>1</sup> Worthies of England. *ubi supra*.

tionary in this respect on the Continent. The papal schism had not yet reached its close, and the scandals and abuses generated by it, had increased, rather than diminished. It was the hope of bringing these disputes to an end, as well as the wish to correct some of the ecclesiastical enormities of the times, that led to the convening of the councils of Pisa, Constance, and Basle, during the first half of the fourteenth century. These councils were assembled on the principle, that the supreme power in the Church does not rest with its sovereign authority, as exercised by the pontiff; but with its parliamentary authority, as vested in a general council. The first of these assemblies was convoked in 1409, the second in 1414, the third in 1433. At Pisa, both the reigning popes were deposed by the council, without any reason stated for the proceeding in relation to the one more than the other; and the council of Constance deposed John XXIII, in whose name it had been convened.

Our Ultramontane Romanists are greatly perplexed, as may be supposed, by these acts of Transalpine liberalism. Unhappily, the liberalism of a popish council, is not greatly preferable to the absolutism of a popish conclave. It was something that the council of Constance should assert its authority to reform the Church, both in its head and in its members; it would have been better if its authority had been wisely exercised to that end. But the proceedings of that assembly towards John Huss and Jerome of Prague, have left upon it an im-



press of corruptness and bad faith, which no time can efface.<sup>1</sup>

John Huss was born at Hussinetz, a small town in Bohemia, in 1373. Wycliffe was then at Oxford, and about thirty years of age. Like his great successor Martin Luther, Huss was the son of poor, but honest parents. He prosecuted his studies in the university of Prague with ardour and success; became a priest; and in 1378 was appointed confessor to Sophia, queen of Bavaria. It was not, however, until 1404, that Huss found himself famous. At that time he had become distinguished as a preacher in the chapel of Bethlehem, in Prague: and from the pulpit of that chapel the great Hussite movement may be said to have had its origin. Twenty years had then passed since the decease of Wycliffe. But the writings of our Reformer were constantly passing from this country into Bohemia, where they were largely transcribed and sold. The early zeal of Huss had been directed simply to the increase of piety in the Church. In reading some of the writings of Wycliffe, he is said to have censured them strongly, and to have advised a student, who was a collector of them, to cast them into the river that passed by the town. But on a better acquaintance with the works of our great countryman, and from the natural course of events, and of his own thoughts, he came

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<sup>1</sup> Labbe. *Acta Conciliorum*, VIII.

to be of another mind concerning Wycliffe and his writings.

The king of Bohemia had his reasons for encouraging the new learning; and his queen not only sympathized with his policy, but extended her best protection to John Huss, as the representative of that learning. Prague, accordingly, became a great school in which much free criticism was broached on all subjects, especially in relation to ecclesiastical opinions and usages. Huss had by this time adopted three leading principles from the writings of Wycliffe—first, that the ultimate authority in regard to the Christian religion, is in the scriptures, and not in the Church; second, that priestly ordination does not give the Holy Ghost, nor confer any spiritual benefit, except in the case of a priest who is already a spiritual man; and thirdly, that the discipline of the Church should be such as to enforce good conduct upon the clergy, partly by requiring them to abstain from all secular occupation, and, if need be, by depriving them of their wealth and revenues.

Huss did not see how much was involved in these principles. Here we have the sufficiency of scripture, and the right of private judgment, assumed in fact, though not in words; and a power vested somewhere, which is to be supreme over all ecclesiastical persons, and all ecclesiastical property. How was it possible that the authority of the Church should stand at all, in the face of the authority of scripture as thus explained? And

this power to reform the Church, if vested in the clergy, was it to be expected that they would so use it in relation to themselves? And if vested in the magistrate, could churchmen be expected to submit to such a master, even in matters of religion? Huss, like most men in his circumstances, prophesied in part. He saw the evil, deplored it, and called for a remedy, but did not see the issue to which the principle involved in his remedy would lead. Some of his opponents appear to have seen much farther, in this respect, than himself. To proceed thus far, was enough to ensure the reproach of being a disciple of Wycliffe, and an enemy of the Church. Accordingly, not only Prague, but Bohemia, was soon divided into two great parties—the Hussites and the Romanists.

In 1408 the archbishop of Prague had seized some two hundred volumes of the writings of Wycliffe, chiefly the property of members of the university, and had committed them to the flames. Huss protested against this proceeding, as both unwise and unjust, and as an infringement on the privileges of the university. Of course, the volumes destroyed were few, compared with those which may be supposed to have escaped the hands of the bishop's officers. In 1409, Alexander V. issued a bull, in which the authorities of Bohemia were required to use the most stringent means to suppress the teaching of the doctrines of Wycliffe in that kingdom. To which Huss replied by saying, 'I appeal from Alexander ill-informed, to Alexander better informed.' Immediately afterwards,



Alexander was succeeded by the infamous John XXIII., who issued a citation requiring Huss to appear before him. The friends of the Reformer urged that he should not appear in person, but by counsel ; whereupon the pope excommunicated Huss, and laid Prague itself under an interdict.

At this point, the defects of the Reformation contemplated by Huss become manifest. While asserting, in effect, the right of private judgment, he was by no means prepared absolutely to reject the authority of the Church ; and while protesting against the extravagances and abuses allied with the practice of auricular confession, prayers for the dead, priestly absolution and ordination, and much beside, he did not renounce the principles on which those usages were founded. The portion of our Protestant truth which he had embraced, nothing could induce him to surrender—but neither his own mind, nor the mind of his followers, had become ripe, at this time, for an open rupture with that ecclesiastical authority through Christendom, which, if not vested in the pope, was left to be largely exercised by him. Huss now retired from Prague for a season. But the queen was known to hold him in high estimation ; the people generally were loud in his praise ; and one man, whose name history has associated pre-eminently with his own, becomes conspicuous at this juncture as his defender—we refer to Jerome of Prague.

Jerome had studied at Oxford, and in Paris had dis-

tinguished himself in discussions with the celebrated Gerson. Before his return to Bohemia, the authorities of Vienna had thrown him into prison, as a favourer of the doctrines of Wycliffe. His liberation was at the request of the University of Prague. Huss did not possess either the genius or the learning of Jerome; but his power, allied as it was with so much goodness, gave him so great an influence over the mind of Jerome, that the latter never failed to look up to him as a disciple to a master. It was natural to the mind of Jerome that he should be disposed to go somewhat farther than Huss in the path of reformation, and he did so.

The great council of Constance consisted of thirty cardinals, twenty archbishops, one hundred and fifty bishops, as many prelates, a great number of abbots and doctors, and eighteen hundred priests. Nearly all the sovereigns of Europe were there, either in person or by their representatives; and the company of strangers brought to a somewhat long residence in the small town of Constance, amounted to 100,000 persons. The object of Sigismund, king of the Romans, better known as the Emperor Sigismund, in convening this council, was, in part, to put an end to the strifes of three men, each of whom claimed to be regarded as the true and only successor of St. Peter; and in part to adopt measures for the suppression of the errors and heresies of the times.

Huss was summoned to appear before this tribunal. He consented so to do, and though a pledge of safe con-

duct, while journeying to Constance, while *there*, and in *returning* to his home, was given to him by the Emperor, the Reformer began his journey with a strong presentiment as to its issue. Huss was soon thrown into prison; Jerome, on making his appearance in the neighbourhood of Constance, was seized, and brought into the town in a cart, loaded with irons. For a considerable interval, the Emperor and the Council were engaged in endeavouring to secure the abdication of John XXIII.—an object which there seemed to be no prospect of realizing, except by threatening his holiness with a full exposure of his monstrous vices and crimes, as the ground of his deposition! And before proceeding to the Bohemian question, and the examination of Huss and Jerome, it was deemed expedient to fix the brand of the Council on Wycliffe, and on his doctrine. Fifty-five articles from the writings of the English heresiarch, which had been condemned in this country, at Rome, and at Prague, were now condemned at Constance; and subsequently, no less than two hundred and sixty articles, selected, or said to have been selected, from the writings of Wycliffe, were declared by the Council to be erroneous or heretical. It was further decreed, that the works of our Reformer, without exception, and wherever found, should be seized and burnt; and as a further expression of hatred to his memory, it was ordered that his body should be taken from its grave, and consumed with fire!

Huss and Jerome, though lodged in prisons distant



from each other, were not ignorant of these proceedings. So had the council done to the master, and in these preliminaries it was easy to read the fate awaiting the disciples. An attempt was made to secure the condemnation of Huss, even without allowing him a hearing—but that course was not found to be practicable. Huss stood before the council on three occasions. The charges brought against him, were brought, for the most part, by parties whose names he was not permitted to know. He replied, by declaring some of the charges to be altogether untrue; by explaining others as being only in part true; and by admitting the remainder, as expressing opinions which he certainly held, but which he was prepared to abandon, if their falsehood could be made clear to him from Holy Scripture. It was this point—the authority of Scripture, as above all other authority; and the judgment of the individual, as being to the individual conscience before all other judgment, that lay at the foundation of the scheme of Huss as a reformer. As we have said—he does not appear to have seen the absolute inconsistency of professing himself a Catholic, while avowing such opinions. But the opinions themselves, were with him convictions, and nothing could induce him to submit to any other guidance. In taking this position, he was prepared to see the corruptions of the ecclesiastical system, as he would not otherwise have seen them; and also to set at naught every plea founded on mere authority, and not upon scripture or reason. In his view, the state

of things was bad, reformation was imperative, and if not to be realized by other means, the wealth and revenues which churchmen were so little disposed to apply to their right uses, should be taken wholly away from them. In these bold conceptions there were the seeds of all coming change, though Huss saw it not. Wycliffe saw much farther. He saw in the corrupt usages which Huss denounced, no more than the natural effect of the false dogmas with which they were allied, and he denounced both. Huss for the most part, spared the dogma, but spoke with an earnestness that could hardly have been exceeded, against what he regarded as its excess, its perversion, its abuse. The same may be said of Jerome, and on this ground they both became martyrs. In fact, their crime consisted, not so much in novelty of opinion, as in their strong protest against the ignorance, the superstition, the worldliness, and the vices of the priesthood. Their dream was of a reformed Catholicism—the dream of an impossibility.

The imprisonment of these injured men extended over many months, that of Jerome over more than a twelvemonth. The chains upon their persons were fastened into the walls of their cell; and their sufferings, from the foulness of the atmosphere, and other causes, appear to have been adjusted to the purpose of subduing their firmness of temper, by exhausting their power of endurance. John Huss never faltered—and perished at the stake. Jerome being thus left alone, and all who had

remained to strengthen the heart of his devout companion being scattered, he shrunk for a season from the terrors arrayed against him, and consented to read a paper which his enemies had prepared as a recantation. But his course was not so to end. His courage soon returned, and if upon his first appearance he had appeared to be less gifted with that quality than Huss—he surpassed him when he came fairly to his trial, not only in boldness, but in his greater display of learning, in the greater readiness of his genius, and in the extraordinary beauty and power of his eloquence. Contrasted with the demeanour of this man, was that of the council. This council consisted, as we have seen, of cardinals, metropolitans, bishops,—in a word, of a selection from the greatest ecclesiastical personages in Christendom. But a gathering from among the lowest of the people, could hardly have exhibited more passion, coarseness, confusion, or uproar, than frequently disgraced the proceedings of this assembly. Once and again, the accused man had to stand silent and motionless, in the presence of his judges, until the hurricane of their wrath and execration had spent itself, and the possibility of obtaining a hearing returned. But in these encounters, even the meek John Huss was more than a match for his assailants—while every sentence that proceeded from the lips of Jerome, in reply to the subtleties thrown at him from all points, and on all topics, seemed like the utterances of inspiration, so admirable was their fitness



and their power. Since the martyrdom of Stephen, the history of the church has given us nothing of the same kind so truly beautiful and noble as are the scenes presented to us, in the last days of Jerome of Prague.

The flames which consumed Huss and Jerome did not put an end to heresy. The Bohemians adopted the cause of their martyred countrymen; and in defence of it, kept the forces of the empire at bay for the next twenty years. Hatred of Rome became the hereditary feeling of millions of people; and the reformation originated by Wycliffe, and sustained in this manner by his disciples in Bohemia, made the great revolution achieved by Luther possible. The Hussites survived John Huss: and their descendants, known by the name of Moravian brethren, have linked the times of Wycliffe and his successors with those of the great Protestant Reformation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Labbe, *Acta Conciliorum*, VIII. 209, et. seq. Lenfant *Hist. du Conc. de Pise*. Hist. et Mon. J. Huss. Theobald. *Historie des Hussites*. The following is the language of the 'safe conduct' guaranteed to John Huss, by the Emperor Sigismund. 'Sigismund, by the grace of God, King of the Romans, &c., to all ecclesiastical and secular princes, &c., and to all our other subjects, greeting. We recommend to you with full affection—to all in general, and to each in particular, the honourable master, JOHN HUSS, Bachelor in Divinity, and Master of Arts, the bearer of these presents, journeying from Bohemia to the Council of Constance; whom we have taken under our protection and safe-guard, and under that of the Empire, enjoining you to receive him, and treat him kindly, furnishing him with all that shall be necessary to speed and assure his journey, as well by water as by land, without taking anything from him or his, for arrivals or

It was a capital article in the offence both of Huss and Jerome, that they refused to concur in the judgment which the council had pronounced on Wycliffe. Huss, when required so to do, went so far as to say, '*I am content that my soul should be where his soul is.*'

Wycliffe's remains had been sleeping beneath the pavement of the quiet chancel of Lutterworth church, more than forty years when the decree that they should be disinterred was executed. Before the accession of the house of Lancaster, it might not have been an easy matter to have carried such a decree into effect. But since the good man's voice was last heard in that Church, new power had come into the hands of the clergy. The pious service to which they gave themselves in this case, may be imagined. In that chancel, within that old oak screen, you see the dignitaries—Chicheley, now primate of all England, being of the number,—to whose zeal and fidelity this most suitable service is assigned, all crowding towards the spot where the object of their search is to be found. Their subordinates and attendants are

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'departures, under any pretext whatever: and calling on you to allow him to pass, sojourn, stop, and return freely and surely, providing him even, if necessary, with good passports, for the honour and respect of the Imperial Majesty. Given at Spires, this 18th day of October, of the year 1414, the Third of our Reign in Hungary, and the Fifth of that of the Romans.' Well might the Emperor blush when Huss reminded him of the pledge thus given. All the attempts of Romanists to alter the atrocious features of this case, serve only to add dishonesty of their own, to that of the men they would exculpate.



many ; and the town's-people, brought together by the novelty of such doings, are many. We think we hear the sound of the axe and spade as the menials do the bidding of their masters. At length the coffin is raised. You see it borne through that old doorway and porch which front towards the river, and so down that narrow road, which curves its way from the high ridge on which the town stands, towards the point where the river is crossed by a rude bridge. As seen from the opposite meadows, that moving crowd, streaming down that hill-side, must have been a strange sight,—a motley multitude ; and as viewed nearer, it must have had its significance for the thoughtful. On the bridge a fire is kindled, and the flesh, or, at least, the bones, of John de Wycliffe, are slowly consumed to ashes. Doctors look on, who have not found it so easy to confute the heretic, as to burn him. But among the people who stand by, are many who remember the presence of the man whose remains are so dealt with, as he filled their parish pulpit, or as he gave them Christian counsel in the homely dwellings of their childhood ; and who, if they dared, would say aloud, that the friend of their early years was a man deserving something other than such indignity. The ashes of Wycliffe are thrown into that river Swift, which, as Fuller says, conveyed them into the Avon, ' Avon into the Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, ' they to the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe





Lutterworth in 1428.



‘are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed  
‘all the world over.’<sup>1</sup> Well spoken—honest one!

‘No—most reverend signors, the work you would do  
‘is not done. The ashes of the heresiarch, thrown into  
‘that stream, are fast passing to oblivion; not so his  
‘doctrine. Wycliffe still lives, still speaks to the living,  
‘and the living will long give heed to him. Do what you  
‘will, men will secrete his books, will read them in secrecy,  
‘and will hand them down as heir-looms in their house-  
‘holds. You—master Henry Chicheley, proud of being  
‘present at this scene, you may make inquisition for such  
‘writings and such offenders, even more rigorously than  
‘primate Arundel has done, but it will not avail. There  
‘is a Providence that will work against you. Your bishops  
‘and priests will presume on the present re-action of  
‘earthly powers in their favour, and will still be, in their  
‘character and manners, all that Wycliffe has said they  
‘should not be—so that men from among those mendicant  
‘brotherhoods, some of whom are now standing about  
‘you on that Lutterworth bridge, will be heard to declaim  
‘loudly against the corruptions that come from your en-  
‘dowments, using all the strong reasons of Wycliffe on that  
‘grave topic, however much they may loathe his memory,  
‘and they will cause your ‘clerks possessioners’ sore trouble.  
‘Even among the bishops, one will be found, who, while  
‘signalizing himself as an antagonist of Wycliffe, will so far

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<sup>1</sup> Church History, 171.



‘ take up some of the most material of his doctrines,  
‘ as to be condemned, confiscated, put in durance.  
‘ While trouble comes from the mendicants on the one  
‘ hand, and from this Reginald Pecock, bishop of Chi-  
‘ chester on the other, the nobles of the realm, and their  
‘ retainers, will be committed to hot wars against each  
‘ other, making the throne itself insecure, filling the  
‘ land with violence and bloodshedding, and leaving  
‘ your successors but little time or means for prose-  
‘ cuting their own peculiar war against heresy. In  
‘ the meanwhile, the seeds which you call heresy will  
‘ vegetate widely, so that when the king comes, a seventh  
‘ Henry, who is to put an end to civil discord, and to  
‘ restore order, he will not find that Lollardism is a thing  
‘ of the past. No—for he will deem it wise to put forth  
‘ his cold strong hand to suppress it, and his policy to  
‘ that end will be more false and cruel than that of the  
‘ worst among the men who have gone before him. Some  
‘ he will imprison and despoil, others he will burn. In the  
‘ registry of every diocese names by hundreds will ap-  
‘ pear, as those of persons so dealt with, during this  
‘ century of turbulence and darkness. In the records  
‘ of the diocese in which you now are, more than five  
‘ hundred such names will have entry.<sup>1</sup> But another  
‘ Henry will soon come; another strong voice calling  
‘ for reformation will soon be heard; and when Martin

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<sup>1</sup> Foxe, Acts and Mon. II. 33.

‘ Luther gives himself to his labours, the people who  
‘ speak the language of John Huss and of John Wycliffe,  
‘ will be found ready to bid him God-speed, and Germany  
‘ and England will be, through the centuries to come, as  
‘ the chiefs in a great anti-papist confederacy—the leaders  
‘ of the world of the future, in the way to its destined  
‘ freedom and manhood.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The bridge which now crosses the Swift, at Lutterworth, has been erected within the memory of old men still living in the neighbourhood. The river, too, has diminished considerably since the fourteenth century. Within the last hundred years, barges have been seen upon it, but nothing of the kind could now float there. Papists and Protestants have put their different constructions on this change—but the follies on either side are not worth repeating.





## APPENDIX.

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### ON THE WRITINGS OF JOHN DE WYCLIFFE.

I. EXPOSITIO DECALOGI. British Museum. Titus D. XIX. Wycliffe wrote several Expositions of the Decalogue. One forms part of a collection of Treatises under the title of 'The Poor Caitiff'. Another of much greater extent in Latin, is preserved in the Bodleian Library; it bears the title, *Compendium X. Mandatorum editum a Magistro Jo. Wickliffe, Doctore Evangelicæ veritatis*. Dr. James has made great use of this MSS. in his 'Apology for John Wickliffe.' Its contents show that it must have been one of the earlier productions of the Reformer. See some account of the MSS. in the British Museum, in the 'Tracts and Treatises' of Wycliffe, by the Author, pp. 1—7.

II. DE HYPOCRITARUM IMPOSTURIS. MS. Corpus Christi College. Cambridge, pp. 1—22. MS. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111. No. 12. pp. 1—17. See p. 411, *et seq.* of this volume.

III. DE OBEDIENTIA PRELATORUM. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. III. No. 12, pp. 17—28. See p. 415, *et seq.* of this volume.

IV. DE CONVERSATIONE ECCLESIASTICORUM. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111. No. 12, pp. 32—54. See p. 421, *et seq.* of this volume.

V. SPECULUM DE ANTICHRISTO. The English title is '*How Antichrist and his Clerks feren true priests from preaching of Christ's Gospel*'. It begins, *First, they say, the preaching of the Gospel maketh discension*. MS.

Corpus Christi College, Cambridge Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111. No. 12.

The extracts in the note on pages 432, 433, of this volume, are from this MS. One of the 'four deceits' said to be resorted to for the purpose of discouraging the preaching of the Gospel, is said to consist in the pretence 'that men should cease from preaching, and give themselves to holy prayers 'and contemplations, because that helpeth christian men more and is better.' Wycliffe replies, 'True men say boldly that true preaching is better than 'prayer by the *mouth*, or though it should come from the *heart* and *pure devotion*, and that it *edifieth more the people* . . . . Devout prayer in men of 'good life is good in certain time; but it is against charity for priests to pray 'evermore, and at no time to preach, since Christ chargeth priests to *preach 'the Gospel*, more than to say *mass* and *matins*.' Ibid.

VI. OF CLERKS POSSESSIONERS. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111. No. 12. The design of this Treatise is to expose the mischiefs to morals and religion, which had resulted, in the view of Wycliffe, from the excessive opulence of the clergy.

In the commencement of this Treatise, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and St. Bernard, are introduced as censuring the secular lordship of the clergy. Clerks who live 'a lustful and worldly life,' declare the life and example of Christ as not a sufficient rule, and therein declare themselves 'strong heretics.' Such men are traitors to God, to lords, and to the common people. To *God* they show themselves traitors by deserting his law; to *lords* by cursing them, except they are prepared to uphold the pretensions of churchmen; and to the *people* by deceiving them, 'teaching them openly, 'that they shall have God's blessing, and bliss in heaven, if they pay truly 'their tithes and offerings to them.' This is the purport of the work.

VII. DE XXXIII. ERRORIBUS CURATORUM. Begins, '*For the office of curates is ordained of God, &c.*' MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111. No. 12. In the Cambridge collection this piece follows that on 'Clerks Possessioners.' The term curate is used as embracing the parochial clergy generally.

In this Treatise Wycliffe complains that the devout and laborious among the parochial clergy, were a class of men who were sure to be out of favour with 'bishops and their officers,' and 'with other curates in the country.' He thus writes on the point of *private judgment* and the *authority of scripture*—the clergy to whom he is referring, he says, are 'Antichrists, forbidding men 'to know their belief, and to speak of Holy Writ. For they say openly that 'secular men should not intermeddle themselves with the Gospel, *to read it 'in the mother tongue*, but *attend to a holy father's preaching*, and *do after such 'in all things*. But this is openly against God's teaching. For God *commandeth generally to each layman*, that he should have God's *commandments* before him, and teach them to his children. And Peter biddeth us 'be ready to give a reason for our faith and hope to each man that asketh it.



'And God commands his priests to *preach* the gospel to each man, as the reason is, because *all men should know it*. Lord! why should worldly priests forbid secular men to speak of the Gospel, since God giveth them great wit of kind (by nature) and great desire to know God and love Him. Since the beginning of the world none have heard higher craft of Antichrist, whereby to destroy Christian men's belief and charity, than is this *blasphemous heresy—that laymen should not intermeddle with the Gospel!*' In the thirtieth chapter, the Reformer reiterates his protest against the coercive processes by which tithes were exacted, and against the application of them to maintain the clergy in luxury, to the neglect of the poor.

VIII. OF THE ORDER OF PRIESTHOOD. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111. No. 12. This piece treats of the same evils with the preceding, and propounds the same remedy—that the clergy should be brought to a better manner of living, by reducing their wealth, and limiting its uses to the worthy.

IX. OF GOOD PREACHING PRIESTS. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. It begins, '*The first general point of poor priests that preach in England is this, &c.*' Its treating of the wrongs of the 'poor priests,' is evidence of its comparatively late date.

In a series of articles, this Treatise presents a vigorous exposure of the abuses of the times, and suggests a variety of means by which a better state of things may be realized. Simony, in every form, should be heavily punished; the men who do good should not heed the anathema of priests, for it often happens that 'God blesseth where they curse;' the exactions made by ecclesiastics to sustain their pomps and superstitions, should be resisted; and the revenues of the clergy being the 'alms of lords,' and granted on certain conditions—viz. to feed certain poor men, to uphold hospitalities, and to maintain good priests, should be applied to such uses. It is further urged, that 'no priest or religious man in our land be *imprisoned* without *open* trial, and true cause fully known.' The man who would refute what is thus written must do so by an appeal, not to tradition of 'sinful wretches,' but to Holy Writ or Reason.

X. THE GREAT SENTENCE OF THE CURSE EXPOUNDED. It begins with the words, '*All heretics again standing the faith of Holy Writ.*' &c. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. See p. 434, *et seq.* of this volume.

XI. DE STIPENDIIS MINISTRORUM. Its English title is—How men should find priests. And it begins, '*Think ye wisely, ye men that find priests,*' &c. But it is restricted to one full quarto page. MS. C. C. C. Cambridge.

XII. DE PRECATIONIBUS SACRIS. Its English title is, '*How prayer of good men helpeth much,*' &c., and it begins, '*Our Lord Jesus Christ teacheth us to pray evermore,*' &c. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111. No. 12. pp. 125—131; and another copy, Class C. Tab. 1, No. 14. This piece extends to nine quarto pages, and exposes the folly of trusting to the perfunctory prayers of priests, while ex-



tolling the efficacy of prayer as proceeding from the truly devout, whether priest or layman.

XIII. DE EPISCOPORUM ERRORIBUS, begins with the words, '*There are eight things by which simple men be deceived,*' &c. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trin. College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111, No. 12. pp. 131—136; and another copy, Class C. Table 1, No. 14. The contents of this piece and of No. X. and XI. forbid our ascribing them to an early period in the career of the Reformer. This tract deals with eight forms of religious error, common among the people.

XIV. A SHORT RULE OF LIFE, FOR EACH MAN IN GENERAL, AND FOR PRIESTS, AND LORDS, AND LABOURERS IN SPECIAL. It begins, '*First when thou risest, or fully wakest,*' &c. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. It consists, as the title will indicate, of an enforcement of social duties from religious motives. It is one amidst many of the Reformer's productions, which show how far he was from all tendency to sympathise with the insurgent doctrines of such men as John Ball, or Wat Tyler.

XV. THREE THINGS DESTROY THE WORLD. This tract consists of five pages—its complaint is against false Confessors, false Merchants; and false Men of Law. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

XVI. IMPEDIMENTA EVANGELIZANTIUM. The English title is '*Of feigned contemplative Life.*' MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin. Tab. 111, No. 12, pp. 136—141. The piece in the '*Poor Caitiff,*' under this title is a shorter and earlier production.

See pp. 383—385 of this volume. This is a stringent argument directed against those who would substitute mass and matins for preaching. Wycliffe insists that priests who do not preach the gospel, therein show themselves so delinquent, that their prayers must be valueless. He also attacks the custom of giving so much prominence to ceremonies and singing in worship, to the hindrance and discouragement of preaching. 'Ah, Lord,' he exclaims, 'if all the study and labour that men now have about "*Salisbury Use,*" with a multitude of new and costly books, were turned into *the making of Bibles*, and in studying and teaching of them, how much should God's law be furthered, and known, and kept, where now it is hindered, unstudied, and unread.'

XVII. THE LORD'S PRAYER—AVE MARIA. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Comments which extend to a few pages only.

XVIII. HOW RELIGIOUS MEN SHOULD KEEP CERTAIN ARTICLES. It begins, '*Christian men pray meetly and devoutly,*' &c. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. A kind of summary of the doctrine of Wycliffe, in relation to faith, polity, and worship, in forty-four articles.

XIX. DE DOMINIS ET SERVIS. The English title is, '*Of Seravnts and Lords, how each should keep his degree.*' MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trin. College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111. No. 12, pp. 156—167.

From its reference to the 'poor priests,' this was a comparatively late production—called forth probably by the insurrection under Wat Tyler.

We have referred in p. 460 of this volume to the doctrine of 'dominion as founded in grace,' as attributed to Wycliffe. The following passage will show how far the Reformer was from allowing theological reasons to interfere with the discharge of social and political duties. 'But here the fiend 'moveth some men to say, that christian men should not be servants or 'vassals to heathen lords, since they are false to God, and less worthy than 'christian men. Neither to christian lords, for they are brethren in kind ' (nature), and Jesus Christ bought men upon the cross, and made them free.' But this doctrine the Reformer brands as 'heresy;' and expounds the doctrine of Peter and Paul on this subject, in a manner which errs rather on the side of servility than of licence. 'Yet some men,' he says, 'who are out of 'charity, slander poor priests with this error, that servants and tenants may 'lawfully withhold rents and service from their lords, when their lords are 'openly wicked in their living. And they invent and utter this falsehood to 'make lords to hate them, and not to maintain the truth of God's law, which 'they teach openly for the honor of God, the profit of the hearers, and the 'establishing of the king's power.' The enemies of the Reformer *inferred* that, if property and authority might be taken from the clergy because delinquent, the same doctrine should be extended to the possessors of wealth and office among the laity. But a distinction is drawn, and on the authority of Scripture, between the two cases. The fathers at Constance, however, and some others, have not been willing to be cognizant of the distinction so made.

XX. DE DIABOLO ET MEMBRIS. The English title of this piece is, '*How Satan and his priests, and the feigned religious, casten by three cursed heresies, to destroy all holy living:*' and it begins, '*As Almighty God in Trinity ordaineth men to come to the bliss of heaven,*' &c. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin. Class. C Tab. 111, No. 12, pp. 177—184.

We must cite the following emphatic sentence from this treatise. 'Christian men should know, that whosoever liveth best prayeth best, and that 'the simple paternoster of a ploughman, who hath charity, is better than a 'thousand masses of covetous prelates, and vain religious.' In this publication, Wycliffe replies to the charge of harshness and severity, in the judgments pronounced by himself and others, on the conduct of the unfaithful among the clergy. He vindicates this course by affirming that the things said are true, and that the example of prophets and apostles, as well as the common law of honesty, require that things should be called by their right names.

XXI. FOR THREE SKILLS LORDS SHOULD CONSTRAIN CLERKS TO LIVE IN MEEKNESS. It begins, '*Open teaching of God's law, old and new,*' &c. MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111, No. 12, pp. 184—193. This piece, and the preceding, appear to belong to a comparatively late period in the life of the Reformer, but we have no means of determining their date with precision.



The principle is here laid down, that the errors and vices of the clergy are evils which 'worldly lords are in debt to amend,' and to which they are the more bound, because of the great advantage, religious and social, that would result to clerks, lords, and commons.

XXII. OF WEDDED MEN AND WIVES. It begins, '*Our Lord God Almighty speaketh in his law of two matrimonies.*' MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. This is a tract on domestic duties.

XXIII. HOW ANTICHRIST AND HIS CLERKS TRAVAIL TO DESTROY HOLY WRIT. It begins, '*As our Lord Jesus Christ ordaineth to make his gospel sadly known.*' MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. See p. 338 *et seq.* of this volume.

XXIV. DE DOMINIS DIVINO. It begins, '*Since false glosses make God's law dark.*' MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Trin. College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111, No. 12, pp. 183—193. This tract refers chiefly to the glosses put on Holy Writ by the clergy, to defend their religious endowments, and to secure for themselves exemption from the controul of the magistrate.

XXV. DE SCHISMA PAPÆ. It begins, '*For this uncouth dissension that is betwixt these popes.*' MS. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111, No. 12, pp. 199—208. See p. 373, *et seq.* in this volume.

XXVI. OF PERFECT LIFE. It begins, '*Christ, not compelling, but freely counselling each man to perfect life.*' This is one of the short pieces included in the 'Poor Caitif.' MS. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 5, No. 24.

XXVII. THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS. It begins, '*Since belief teaches us that every evil is only sin, &c.*' MS. Bodleian Archiv. A. 83. There is a short tract with this title in Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 5, No. 6, pp. 35—38.

In this Tract Wycliffe cautions men against being deceived by the distinction commonly made between *venial* and *mortal* sins, inasmuch as 'they know not deadly sin from venial.' Knowledge of Holy Scripture all men should possess—'so each man here must need con divinity—some more, some less—if they will be saved.' But the friars are said to be especially hostile to this doctrine, and more skilled in preaching up Spencer's crusade, that men may be slain, than in preaching the gospel, that they may be enlightened and saved; and then follow some strong denunciations of the war spirit which this crusade had called up.

XXVIII. VITA SACERDOTUM. It begins—'*The peril of Friars is the last of eight.*' MS. Bodleian Archiv. A. 3072.

This piece contains an allusion to the council and the earthquake in London in 1382. It consists of eight quarto pages. In its commencement, Wycliffe makes mention of the clergy as attempting to vindicate their claims to their endowments by appeals to the Old Testament. But the reply given, as on similar occasions, is, that the Levitical priesthood were destitute of endowments in the sense intended; that the provision made in their case was, that they



should *not* be possessed of landed property, and that they should depend on the tithes and offerings made to them by the people. 'Either God's law is false, or the realm of England will be punished sharply for the persecuting of poor priests only for saying that Antichrist should be ashamed of their manner of life, and that the *bread* of the altar, as *very God's body*, as the gospel saith, and as common faith holds.' It was thus the Reformer expressed himself on those topics in the year when the measures taken by Courtney against Hereford, Ashton, and others, were in process.

XXIX. DE BLASPHEMIA CONTRA FRATRES. The copy of this work in the Bodleian has the following title, DE TRIBUS BLASPHEMIIS MONACHORUM. It begins, *It is said that three things stourblie this realm.* MS. Archiv. A. 83.

This treatise gives forth the same doctrine with the preceding concerning the Eucharist. 'It is Christ's *body*, and *bread also*, neither shall be brought to nought, for these are not contrary.' Scripture and reason are said to be so clear on this subject, 'that if we had a hundred popes, and all the friars were cardinals, yet should we trust more to the law of the gospel than to all this multitude.'—'Since bodily eating was bidden of Christ, and this bodily eating might not be except there were bread, then the bread lasts after the *sacreding*.' In the remainder of the treatise, Wycliffe applies his usual arguments against the mendicancy of the friars, and their vending of pardons 'without condition,' and for money.

XXX. DE ECCLESIE DOMINIS. Its English title is, *Of the Church of Christ, of her members, and of her governance.* It begins, *Christ's Church is his Spouse, that hath three parts.* MS. British Museum, Bib. Reg. 18, B. ix. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 5, No. 6, pp. 38—63.

This treatise censures the doings of the crusaders in Flanders, and could not have been written, accordingly, before 1383. Its substance is, that the Bishop of Rome owes his position as pope, and head of the church, to the patronage and endowment bestowed upon him by the emperor; that from the idleness and worldliness of the clergy, came the religious orders—monks, canons, and friars, all of whom became in their turn equally corrupt; that the friars are especially heretical in the matter of the Eucharist; that the pretence of the pope and his clergy to a power of binding and loosing, is a fiction and a fraud; that the pope is, beyond doubt, eminently the Antichrist; and that the laity are bound, on pain of God's displeasure, to take measures to reform the clergy. In this work Wycliffe divides the church into three parts, the part in heaven; the part on earth, consisting of all that will be saved, and no other; and the part in purgatory; the latter he describes as the 'sleeping' church, consisting of those who 'sin no more.' Men are said to fall 'into many errors in praying for these saints,'—the saints in 'purgatory,' and since they are all dead in body, 'Christ's words' says Wycliffe, 'may be taken of them—follow we Christ, and let the dead bury the dead.' This treatise is one of the three recently printed by Dr. Todd.

XXXI. POSTILS. MS. British Museum, Bib. Reg. xviii. See p. 388 *et seq.* of this volume.

XXXII. CONTRA MENDICITATEM VALIDAM. In English, and beginning,—*Most worshipful and gentlest Duke of Glocester.* It sets forth the substance of a discussion before the duke, on questions at issue between a clergyman and a friar. The former half of it is occupied in giving a summary of the debate as it respected certain theological opinions; the latter presents some of the most plausible things to be said in favour of the begging practices of the friars, with the common arguments opposed to that usage. In the preliminary discussion, Wycliffe states, ‘God is so good, that in each goodness he is before, and in each evil he is after the effect.’ This is one of a collection of MSS. in Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. 111, No. 12. In the ‘*Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Angliæ et Hiberniæ*,’ published in Oxford in 1697, the volume containing this piece is thus described, as ‘*Jo. Wicliffe’s Works to the Duke of Lancaster in 1368.*’ But this description is by a modern hand, and the treatise on which it is written is that numbered II. in this series, and which, from its reference to the disputes about the Eucharist, and other matters, could not have been written earlier than 1381. There is no ground to suppose that any of the pieces of this volume should be ascribed to a period so early as 1368, except the piece intitled, *DE ULTIMA ÆTATE ECCLESIE*, for an account of which see pp. 43—49 of this volume, and note B. We have no means of fixing the date of this piece addressed to the Duke of Glocester. It should not, I think, be placed among the earlier, nor with the latest productions of the Reformers.

XXXIII. DE SATHANÆ ASTU CONTRA FIDEM. This tract begins,—*The fiend seeketh many ways to mar men in belief.* It consists of two pages only, and is in the same volume with the preceding piece, in Trinity College, Dublin.

XXXIV. IN REGULAM MINORITARUM. In English, in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Sometimes described as the *RULE OF ST. FRANCIS—THE TESTAMENT OF ST. FRANCIS.*

XXXV. DETERMINATIONES EUCHARISTIÆ :—*AD RATIONIS KYNINGHAM*;—and, *DETERMINATIONES MAGISTRI J. WICKLIFF, CONTRA CARMELITAM KYNINGHAM*, appear to be different descriptions of the same treatise, which was an answer to a Carmelite friar, concerning a pretended miracle urged in support of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Lambeth Library, Knighton de Event. Angliæ, p. 2650.

XXXVI. DE QUESTIONIBUS VARIIS CONTRA CLERUM. In English, in Lambeth Palace Library. Cat. MSS. 151. Another copy in the same Library, No. 30, called *QUESTIONES XXVI.* It begins, *Almighty God in Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, both in the old law and the new.*

XXXVII. DE MODO ORANDI. In English, in the Bodleian Library, Laud, C. 3, and in the British Museum, Cotton MSS. Titus D. xix. It is also intitled, *DE DUODECIM IMPEDIMENTIS PRECATIONUM, OR, THE TWELVE*



LETTINGS OF PRAYER. In the Prologue of the MS. in the British Museum, the twelve hindrances of prayer are enumerated—'sin, doubting, asking things we ought not,' &c.

XXXVIII. DE ANIMA. A part of this treatise, under the title 'De Incarnatione Verbi,' is in the British Museum, Bib. Reg. 7, B. iii.

XXXIX. DE VIRTUTIBUS ET VITIIS. In the British Museum, is a short tract under this title. Titus D. xix. It treats on the following matters:—'The seven works of mercy, bodily and ghostly; five bodily sins; five sins ghostly; the cardinal virtues; septem mortalia peccata.' In Bib. Reg. 7, A. xxvi. is another copy of this tract, which varies considerably from the former; in some instances the chapters are abridged, in others the chapters considerably altered,—a liberty very common with the transcribers of those times. This MS. varies from the preceding in another respect, as it treats of the 'seven sacraments—six manners of consenting to sin—four things that needen to man.' Baber 47.

XL. PAUPER RUSTICUS; CONFESSIO DERELICTI PAUPERIS; and the POOR CAITIF—different titles of the same treatise. It consists of a series of tracts in English, intended to present the elements of religious instruction, in a form adapted to the humblest of the people capable of reading. It is described by its author, as 'sufficient to lead simple men and women, of goodwill, the right way to heaven.' There are copies of this work in the Lambeth Palace Library; in Trinity College, Dublin; and in the British Museum. These collections vary a little from each other. The points included in the Dublin MS. are as follows—OF THE CREED: *The ground of all goodness is stedfast faith, &c.* OF THE COMMANDMENTS: *A man asked of Christ, What he should do, &c.* OF THE PATERNOSTER: *Christ saith, Who that loveth me shall keep my commandments, &c.* OF PERFECT LIFE: *Christ not compelling but freely counselling each man, &c.* OF TEMPTATION: *But he that is verily fed with this bread and cometh down, &c.* OF THE CHARACTER OF OUR HEAVENLY HERITAGE: *Every wise man that claimeth his heritage, &c.* OF GHOSTLY BATTLE: *The Almighty saith by Holy Job, &c.* OF THE LOVE OF JESUS: *Whoever you be that araiest thee to love God, &c.* OF MAN'S WILL: *Every deed punishable, either reprovabale of man's will, &c.* OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE: *Christ loved much Mary and Martha her sister, &c.* OF CHASTITY: *I write this treatise in five short chapters, &c.* The substance of this work has been printed in the British Reformers, from the copy in the British Museum. See pp. 382—385 of this volume.

XLI. EXPOSITIO ORATIONIS DOMINICÆ. This is a different comment on the Lord's Prayer from that which forms part of the 'Poor Caitiff.' It enters more into the subject of ecclesiastical abuses. 'In Lambeth Library, Cott. MSS. 594, is a transcript of the Prologus in Expositionem Orationes Dominicæ.' Herein are condemned the lucrative catholic tenets of works of supererogation, indulgences, and auricular confession, and the Romish hierarchy are reproved for withholding from the people the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue. Baber 48, Lewis, No. 89.



XLII. IN APOCALYPSIN. This is an exposition of parts of the Apocalypse. It begins thus—*St. Paul the Apostle saith, that all those who would live meekly in Christ Jesus, &c.* It is in the British Museum, Bib. Reg. E. 67.

XLIII. SERMO IN FESTO ANIMARUM; DE SERMONE DOMINI IN MONTE; and OCTO BEATITUDINES, appear to be different titles of the same work. It is in English in the British Museum, Cott. MSS. Titus D. xix. It is in Latin in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 362, S. C. 5, 8, No. 13. The English discourse begins—*Friends, St. John Chrysostom on the homily upon this Gospel, saith, &c.* Wycliffe was charged with having published seventy-four erroneous opinions in this discourse.

XLIV. IN XVII CAPUT JOANNIS. *Pubelevatis oculis in cælum Jesus.* This is a homily in English, beginning—*This Gospel of John telleth what loves, &c.* It is among the Wycliff MSS. in C. C. College, Cambridge.

XLV. DE SURDO ET MUTO APUD MARCUM. *Iterum exiens de finibus Tyri.* This is another homily in English. It begins—*This Gospel telleth a miracle, &c.* It is in Trinity College, Cambridge. MS. 349, Class 4.

XLVI. DE PHARISÆO ET PUBLICANO. This is a detached homily; also attributed to Wycliffe. Lewis, No. 97. It begins—*This Gospel telleth in a parable, &c.*

XLVII. SPECULUM PECCATORIS. *Quoniam in via sumus vitæ labentis.* This tract has the English title—"Visitation of Sick men," and begins thus—*My dear son or daughter, it seemeth that thou ligheth fast, &c.* It is attributed to Wycliffe, and is in the British Museum, Bib. Reg. E. 1732.

XLVIII. AUGUSTINUS ARGUAM TE QUANDO NESCIIS. It begins—*The Holy doctor St. Austin, speaking in the person of Christ.* It is in the collection, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

XLIX. SPECULUM SECULARIM DOMINORUM. *Cum veritas fide, eo plus rutilet.* 'Archbishop Ussher tells us that a copy of this tract is in manuscript in the King's Library, in Latin. By what his Grace has transcribed from it, it appears that Dr. Wicklif had written before, "Prospeculum Secularum Dominorum," in English.' Lewis, No. 137.

L. DE BLASPHEMIA. 'Archbishop Ussher quotes this tract in his book "De Christianorum Ecclesiarum Successione," and tells us that in it Wicklif observes, that the true doctrine of the sacrament of the Eucharist was retained in the church a thousand years, "even till the loosing of Satan."' Lewis, No. 199.

LI. FIVE BODILY WITTS. There is a tract under this title in Trinity College, Cambridge, B. viii. 37. It begins—*Thus should a man rule his five bodily witts.*

LII. SEVEN WORKS OF BODILY MERCY, AND SEVEN DEEDS OF GHOSTLY MERCY. Works with these titles are in the public library of Cambridge, 120, No. 467.

LIII. OF PRIDE. It begins—*Pride is too much love that a man hath to himself, &c.* Bib. Reg. Titus D. xix.

LIV. DE ACTIONIBUS ANIMÆ. There is a Latin Treatise under this title in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, attributed to Wycliffe. It begins—*Gratia dicendarum restat tractatus de actibus*.

LV. HERE BEGINNETH THE NINE VIRTUES, &c. There is a tract in the British Museum under this title, attributed to Wycliffe. Bib. Reg. E. 1732. It begins—*All manner of men should hold God's biddings, &c.*

LVI. A DISCOURSE IN OLD ENGLISH AGAINST THE VICES OF THE CLERGY, AND THE USURPATIONS OF THE BISHOP OF ROME IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, HELD UP IN THIRTY-SEVEN ARTICLES. Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. 1. No. 14. This work is also in the British Museum, Bib. Reg. Titus D., and is attributed to Wycliffe by Wanley. It is throughout expressive of Wycliffe's opinions, and many passages are transcripts from his different works. The editors of the Wycliffe Bible attribute it to John Purvey, and suppose it to have been written some ten years after the decease of the Reformer. It is the work better known under the title ECCLESIAE REGIMEN, and which has been recently printed. See p. 478 of this volume.

LVII. OF TEMPTATION OF THE FIEND. There is an imperfect work under this title in Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. 3. No. 12.

LVIII. HOW MEN OF PRIVATE RELIGION SHOULD LOVE MORE THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S HESTS, AND HIS ORDINANCE, THAN ANY NEW LAWS, NEW RULES, AND CUSTOMS OF SINFUL MEN. This is a piece which immediately follows the preceding in the same collection, pp. 152—156.

LIX. TRACTATUS EVANGELII DE SERMONE DOMINI IN MONTE, CUM EXPOSITIO ORATIONIS DOMINICÆ. This is the title given to the first section of a manuscript volume in Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. 1, No. 23. These expositions, with a further exposition of the sixth and seventh chapter of Matthew, extend, if my notes may be trusted on this point, to page 195 of the volume.

TRACTATUS DE ANTICHRISTO, CUM EXPOSITIO IN XXIII, XXIV, XXV. CAP. ST. MATTHEW. This work closes with page 313. TRACTATUS IN SERMONEM DOMINI, QUEM FECERAT VALEDICENDO DISCIPULIS SUIS, to page 333. These three pieces, as bearing three distinct titles, have been not unnaturally described separately, in the catalogue of the Trinity College MSS., and by Bale, Lewis, and other writers. It is plain, however, from certain passages, that they have a connection with each other, though they appear to have been written as separate treatises, and to have been first known as such to the Reformer's disciples.

LX. TRACTATUS DE STATUS INNOCENTIÆ. This work is in the same volume. It extends to about seventeen pages, and begins—'Ut supradicta magis appareant oportet parumper disgrede.' To what this "supradicta" refers, does not appear; and it is not uncommon in the writings of Wycliffe to find parts of treatises thus detached, and known by separate



titles—a circumstance which has added much to the difficulty of presenting a complete and accurate account of his productions.

LXI. TRACTATUS DE TEMPORE. This work is detached from its original connexion. It is the treatise described by the same title in Trinity College Library, Cambridge, and numbers thirty-seven pages in the Dublin volume, but not more than ten of the large folio volume in Cambridge.

The remaining part of this volume is occupied with pieces expository of different passages of Scripture, and with one document under the following title :—

LXII. DE CAPTIVO HISPANENSI—FILIA COMITIS DE DENE INCARCERATO INFRA SEPTA WESTMONAST. It relates to a question concerning the rights of sanctuary. I am not aware of the ground on which it has been attributed to Wycliffe. Wycliffe's connexion with John of Gaunt may have led to his giving publicity to such a paper. Mention is made of the case to which it refers by several historians, and a number of papers relating to it may be seen in Rymer's *Fædera*.

LXIII. DE VERITATE SCRIPTURÆ. A large work under this title is preserved in the Bodleian Library, and in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. The copy in the Bodleian is imperfect at the beginning, the first page commencing in a part of the first chapter. The copy in Dublin, which is perfect, commences with these words,—‘Restat parumper discutere errores et concordias circa sensus Scripturæ hodie plus solito seminatos, tum quia in ea consistit salus fidelium.’ The treatise ends thus,—‘Istud itaque dixerim pro nunc in communi de heresi, ut sciatur ex fructu veritatis Scripturæ notare et cavare hereticos, et ut plenius intelligatur tractatus de simonia, quem si Deus voluerit diffusius pertractare.’ The close of the Bodleian MS. agrees with that of the MS. in Dublin, but the first page is without any initial letter or heading, and begins in the middle of a sentence.

In both manuscripts, the chapters are thirty-one in number, but the chapters six and seven are not duly marked in the Bodleian copy. This copy closes at the middle of the last page, and the scribe has indicated the completeness of the work by placing its title in the space below.

The volume in the Bodleian is a small folio; it numbers 621 pages, and each page consists of about twenty-six lines. The Dublin copy does not exceed 244 pages, but the pages are larger, and double-columned, with nearly a thousand words in each. The volume in the Bodleian includes no other treatise; in the Dublin volume the *De Veritate Scripturæ* is followed by three other treatises, bearing the following titles :—DE SIMONIA. DE APOSTASIA. DE BLASPHEMIA. The treatise DE SIMONIA begins thus,—‘Post generalem sermonem de heresi, restat de ejus partibus pertractandum.’ It consists of eight chapters, and extends to about forty pages. The treatise DE APOSTASIA commences,—‘Restat ulterius ponere aliud principium pro ambitu heresis simoniacæ perscrutando, quamvis enim simonia, blasfemia, et apostasia committuntur ad subsistendi, &c. It extends to nearly twenty pages, and is di-



vided into two chapters. The remaining part of the volume is occupied with the treatise *DE BLASPHEMIA*, which begins—‘*Restat succinte de blasfemia pertractandum. Est autem blasfemia insipiens detractio honoris domini.*’

It has been supposed, partly from the order in which these pieces succeed each other, and partly from the references made in them from one to the other, that they were all portions of a large theological work. This notion derives some support also from the manner in which the names of these pieces occur in a work bearing the title *SUMMA THEOLOGICA*. “This title appears in a very ancient manuscript catalogue of Wycliffe’s writings, which is in the imperial library at Vienna. The work is described as consisting of twelve chapters, the titles of which are as follows :—1. *DE MANDATIS*. 2. *DE STATU INNOCENTIÆ*. 3—5. *DE DOMINO*. 6. *DE VERITATE SCRIPTURÆ*. 7. *DE ECCLESIA*. 8. *OFFICIO REGIS*. 9. *DE POSTATE PAPÆ*. 10. *DE SIMONIA*. 11. *DE APOSTASIA*. 12. *DE BLASPHEMIA*.”—*Baber* xlv. Here it will be seen that these pieces intervene between the *DE VERITATE SCRIPTURÆ*, and the three treatises which immediately succeed it in the Dublin MS. On what authority the title *SUMMA THEOLOGICA* is given to the whole collection we do not know. That title is possibly of a later date than the works themselves. Indeed few things were more common among the transcribers of the fourteenth century, than to place a number of treatises together, all having completeness in themselves, and all, it may be, published separately, while certain of them contain allusions, and have probably some relation to each other. In the writings of Wycliffe, references in one treatise to the contents of another, are very common, without being meant to indicate more than that it was not necessary to discuss a topic again which had been discussed elsewhere.

It is important to remark, that in the tenth chapter of the Bodleian copy of the *De Veritate Scripturæ*, there is a reference to the Vigil of the Annunciation in 1378, which determines the date of this production. This work, in both the existing copies, is exceedingly difficult to read, consisting, as it does, in great part, of obscure discussions, which have been rendered still more unintelligible by the barbarous and technical Latin in which they are clothed, and by the abbreviated, and almost illegible character of the writing. Dr. James, the author of the work intitled—“*An Apology for John Wycliffe*,” was the Librarian of the Bodleian, in the time of James I. In that work he has given passages from the *Veritate Scripturæ*, but in the manuscript volume of extracts from the writings of Wycliffe, preserved in the Bodleian, in the hand-writing of Dr. James, there are characteristic passages transcribed from the *De Veritate Scripturæ*, extending to nearly a hundred pages. These passages, and such parts of the work itself as may be deciphered with an approach to certainty, warrant the description which I have given of this treatise in the “*Life and Opinions of Wycliffe*.”

LXIV. In a volume in Trinity College, Dublin, are the following works attributed to Wycliffe. Class C. Tab. 5. No. 8.

1. Three pieces on the CREED, the PATERNOSTER, and the AVE MARIA, two pages each. The first begins with—*It is sooth that belief is grounded, &c.* The second—*We shall believe that this Paternoster, &c.* The third—*Men greet commonly our Lady, God's Mother, &c.*

2. OF THE SEVEN HERESIES. It begins—*For false men multiply books of the Church, &c.* The seven heresies are divided into seven chapters. The contents of this piece show it to be from the pen of Wycliffe, the whole being directed, after his manner, against the friars; and the fourth heresy, which is said to consist in saying, 'that the sacred host is in no manner bread, but either naught, or an accident without a subject,' shows that this is one of the Reformer's later productions. Fol. 4—9.

3. OF THE DECALOGUE. This begins—*All manner of men should hold God's biddings.* The part of the Decalogue relating to God is treated in twelve chapters; that relating to man in twenty-eight. Fol. 9—27. See No. 1 in this Series.

4. ON FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY. It begins—*For it is said in holding of our holiday.* This is a work in six chapters, but does not exceed six pages. Fol. 27—30.

5. OF THE SEVEN WORKS OF BODILY MERCY. It begins—*If a man were sure that to-morrow he should come before a judge.* Fol. 30—35.

6. OPERA CHARITATIS. Beginning—*Sith we should serve our parishioners in spiritual alms.* Fol. 35—38. This piece, and the two preceding, are in the Library of New College, Oxford.

7. SEPTEM PECCATA CAPITALIA. Beginning—*Since belief teacheth us that every evil is either sin or cometh of sin.* This is the work of which an account is given from the copy in the Bodleian in the preceding pages. See pp. 66—71. It extends, in the MS. from p. 38 to 60. See No. xxvii. in this series.

8. DE ECCLESIA ET MEMBRIS EJUS. This work is also in the British Museum. Fol. 63—75. See No. xxx. in this Catalogue.

9. DE APOSTASIA ET DOTATIONE ECCLESIE. It begins—*Since each Christian man is holden.* It exhibits, as the title suggests, the doctrine of Wycliffe concerning the evils of ecclesiastical endowments. Fol. 76—80. There is nothing specific in this treatise to determine its date, but its tone and substance show it to have been one of Wycliffe's later performances. Its purpose is to prove that the friars are chargeable with *apostacy* in forsaking the order of Christ for another; and that the clergy have become guilty of the same sin in preferring an endowed church, to a church sustained by the willing offerings of the faithful, as instituted by Christ and his Apostles. This is the second of the three treatises printed by Dr. Todd.

10. TRACTATUS DE PSEUDO FRERIS. It begins—*For many persons hearing that friars be called Pseudo, or Hypocrites.* It consists of arguments against the peculiarities of the religious orders. Fol. 81—95.

11. OF THE EIGHT WOES THAT GOD WISHED TO FRIARS. Beginning—



"*Christ biddeth us beware with these false prophets.*" This piece relates to the same subject with the preceding, but consists of a parallel between the Pharisees and the mendicants. Fol. 95—101.

12. *EGRESSUS JESUS DE TEMPLO*. It begins—*This Gospel telleth much wisdom that is hid to many men.* Homily on Matt. xxiv. Also, in Trinity College, and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. This is a detached homily. In the volume of Homilies in the British Museum, Bib. Reg. 18, B. ix. p. 175. is the following passage—"All our west land is with one pope or the other, and he that is with the one hateth the other and all his. And yet hypocrites feign that this is all for charity, but this hypocrisy is worse than the sin before." The first part of this sentence, it seems, is in the Dublin MS., and comparison would probably show that it is merely a strayed postil. Fol. 101—116.

13. *OF ANTICHRIST AND HIS MEYNEE* (or train, followers). This begins—*David saith, Lord, set thou a law-maker upon me.* There is a tract attributed to Wycliffe under the title—*DE ANTICHRISTO ET MEMBRIS*. But the later piece, according to Bale, begins—'Quem admodum Dominus Jesus ordinavit.' Fol. 116—124. This is the last of the three treatises lately printed and edited by Dr. Todd, of Dublin. It has its place in a volume, the pieces in which are undoubtedly for the most part, from the pen of Wycliffe. But I find myself obliged to regard this piece as not from the pen of the Reformer.

It expresses opinions as to the errors and vices of the entire hierarchy, with the pontiff at its head, which Wycliffe certainly did not publish until within a few years of his decease, and the feeble judgment, and the puerile taste, which characterize the whole manner of the performance, forbid my thinking that Wycliffe *could* so have written at that time. By the 'meynee' of Antichrist is meant, the whole gradation of churchmen, and the religious, of all orders and of both sexes; and a rhetorical contrast is instituted, in the form of an antithesis, between the course pursued by these alleged followers of Antichrist, and that pursued by the true disciples of Christ; and this antithesis is extended, without interruption, through more than five and twenty pages, until elaboration and ingenuity, such as they are, can be stretched no farther, and the straining and the repetitions become utterly wearisome. If written by Wycliffe at all, it must have been written by him when nearly fifty years of age, and we feel assured that the Reformer was incapable, either then or at any time, of perpetrating such a piece of literary folly.

The piece abounds, moreover, in words that do not occur in the known writings of Wycliffe—as any one may ascertain by comparing it with the works of the Reformer which have been printed, or with the glossary appended to the Oxford Edition of his Bible.

The omissions too, in this treatise, are significant. In Wycliffe's pieces written after 1381, whatever may be the main topic of them, there are generally such references to the disputes about the Eucharist, or about enabling



the people to read the Scriptures in English, as to render it all but certain that in such a striving after the multiplication of points of difference between the orthodox and their opponents, there would have been large reference to these particulars, if Wycliffe had been the author. But there is no reference of this kind. In fact, we feel no hesitation in saying, that the work is evidently, like the 'Wycliffe's Apology' which Dr. Todd has before published—not a production by Wycliffe, but a composition by one of his Lollard disciples. Its measure of agreement with the opinions of Wycliffe, is sufficient to account for the accident of its being found where it is. It is strange, that of five pieces printed by Dr. Todd, as from the pen of Wycliffe, three should not be his.

14. OF ANTICHRIST'S SONG IN THE CHURCH. It begins—*Also prelates, priests, and friars, put on simple men, that they say that God's office or service be not to be sung with note.* Fol. 124—126.

15. OF PRAYER, A TREATISE. Beginning—*Also Bishops and Friars putten to poor men what they say, &c.* This piece ends on the Fol. 127.

16. NOTA DE CONFESSIOE. This work extends to eleven pages, and begins—*Two virtues be in man's soul, by which a man should be ruled.* Fol. 127—138.

17. CHRIST, FORSOOTH, DID ALL THAT HE COULD TO OBEY LORDS. This is the beginning of a tract without title, ending on the same page.

18. NOTA DE SACRAMENTO ALTARIS. It begins—*Christian men's belief, taught of Jesus Christ, God and Man.* Fol. 138—145.

19. CHRYSOSTOM SAITH, THAT FISHERS AND BUYSTOUSE MEN, MAKING EACH DAY NETS. This is the beginning of a piece without title—It consists of a dialogue between Christ and Satan. Fol. 152—154.

22. NEITHER MAN NOR WOMAN MAY PERFECTLY DO THE SEVEN WORKS OF MERCY. CLERKS KNOW THAT A MAN HATH FIVE WITS OUTWARD. These are the beginnings of pieces without title. They extend to little more than a page each. They appear to be short extracts on subjects which the Reformer had discussed more largely in other works—if, indeed, they are to be regarded as from his pen.

23. HOW ARE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS PUT THAT ARE WRITTEN HEREAFTER. The work which thus begins is without title. It extends over more than forty leaves—from page 164—218 of the volume: and I had taken this note of its extent at the time of examining it, but from some subsequent oversight I failed to describe it correctly in my former catalogue of the Wycliffe M,S,S. This is the piece which has been recently published by the Camden Society, under the editorship of Dr. Todd, Librarian of Trinity College, Dublin. It is published under the title of 'Wycliffe's Apology.' But it was not written by Wycliffe. See Note B. of Appendix.

24. The following are the beginnings of three other short pieces, forming the conclusion of this volume.—*It is written in Holy Writ, that there were three Patriarchs. These be the nine points that the Lord Jesus answered a holy man. Of the deeds of mercy God will speak at the dreadful day.* Fol. 218, 219.

LXV. In the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, is a folio volume with the following works attributed to Wycliffe. MS. 326. c. 5, 8. They consist of scholastic treatises on philosophical and theological topics, and the uninitiated reader will be able to form a sufficient notion of their character from the account of the first three books of the *Triologus* in the present volume.

1. *DE ENTE COMMUNI.* In primis supponitur ens esse, hoc enim non probari potest nec ignorari ab aliquo. Fol. 1—5. 2. *DE ENTE PRIMO.* Extenso ente secundum ejus maximam ampliationem, possibile est venari in tanto ambitu ens primum. Fol. 5—9. 3. *DE PURGANDO ERRORES, ET VERITATE IN COMMUNI.* Consequens est purgare errores. Fol. 15—23. 4. *DE PURGANDO ERRORES ET UNIVERSALIBUS IN COMMUNI.* Tractatu continentur dicta de universalibus. 5. *DE UNIVERSALIBUS.* Tractatus de universalibus continet xvi. capitula cujus primum. Fol. 23—27. 6. *DE TEMPORE.* In tractando de tempore sunt aliqua ex dictis superius capienda. Fol. 37—47. 7. *DE INTELLECTIONE DEI.* Illorum quæ insunt Deo communiter quædam insunt sibi sol. Fol. 47—53. 8. *DE SCIENTIA DEI.* Ex dictis superius satis liquet quod scientiam quam Deus. Fol. 53—70. 9. *DE VOLITIONE DEI.* Tractando de volitione Dei quam oportet ex dictis supponere. Fol. 70—91. 10. *DE PERSONARUM DISTINCTIONE.* Superest investigare de distinctione et convenientia personarum quas credimus plena fide. Fol. 91—115. 11. *DE YDEIS.* Tractando de Ydeis primo oportet quaerere si sunt. Fol. 115—122. 12. *DE POTENTIA PRODUCTIVA DEI.* Veritatum quas deus non potest renovare. Fol. 122—134. 13. *DE SERMONE DOMINI, IN III. PART.* Licet totum Evangelium. Fol. 134—141.

LXVI. *DE UNIVERSALIBUS:* Eccl. Cathed. Lincoln. A. 9.

LXVII. *DE ENTE UNIVERSALI et ATTRIBUTIS DIVINIS.* Trin. Coll. Dub.

LXVIII. *DE TEMPORIS QUIDDITATE.* In the library of the cathedral church at Lincoln (A. 9.) is a part of this treatise under the title *DE TEMPORE.*

The manuscripts which follow are in the Imperial Library of Vienna: they are mentioned in Mr. Baber's Catalogue of the writings of Wycliffe prefixed to his edition of the Reformer's New Testament, and are copied from Denis's Catalogue of the Latin Theol. MSS in the Imperial Library.

LXIX. 1. *DE MINORIBUS FRATRIBUS SE EXTOLLENTIBUS.* This and the piece intitled *DE PERFECTIONE STATUUM*, are the same tract. 2. *DE SECTIS MONACHORUM.* It exists in the same collection intitled, 'De concordatione Fratrum cum sectâ simplici Christi. 3. *DE QUATUOR SECTIS NOVELLIS.* This tract is also intitled, *DE PRÆVARICATIONE PRÆCEPTORUM.* 4. *DE FUNDATIONE SECTARUM.* 5. *DE SOLUTIONE SATHANÆ.* 6. *RESPONSIONES AD XIV. ARGUMENTA RADULPHI STRODI.* 7. *LITERA PARVA AD QUENDAM SOCIUM.* 8. *SPECULUM MILITANTIS ECCLESIE.* 9. *DE ORATIONE ET ECCLESIE PURGATIONE.* 10. *DE GRADIBUS CLERI.* 11. *DE GRADUATIONIBUS.* 12. *DE DUOBUS GENERIBUS HERETICORUM.* The persons here denominated heretics, are those who have con-



tracted the guilt of either simony or apostasy. 13. DE QUATUOR INTERPRETATIONIBUS. 14. SUPER IMPOSITIS ARTICULIS, and SOCII ARGUMENTUM CONTRA VERITATEM, are different titles given to the same tract. 15. DE CITATIONIBUS FRIVOLIS ET ALIIS VERSUTIIS ANTICHRISTI. 16. DE JURAMENTO ARNOLDI (DE GRANNARIO) COLLECTORIS PAPÆ. 17. DE SEX JUGIS. A treatise upon the relative duties. 18. DE EXHORTATIONE NOVI DOCTORIS. This is conjectured to be an exercise performed for the degree of Doctor of Divinity. 19. DE ORDINE CHRISTIANO. Twelve opinions subversive of the power of the Pope were extracted from this book. MSS. Twini, A. 218. 20. DE VATICINATIONE. 21. DIALOGUS INTER VERRITATEM ET MENDACIUM. 22. EPISTOLA, DE PECCATO IN SPIRITUM SANCTUM. 23. LITERA PARVA AD QUENDAM SOCIUM. 24. EPISTOLA AD ARCHIEPISCOPUM CANTUAR. 25. LITERA AD EPISCOPUM LINCOLN. DE AMORE, SIVE DE QUINTUPplici QUÆSTIONE. 26. DE EUCHARISTIA ET PÆNITENTIA. In this treatise Wycliffe opposes the doctrine of transubstantiation, and questions the use of auricular confession. 27. DE OCTO QUÆSTIONIBUS PROPOSITIS DISCIPULO. It is a letter upon the subject of tithes. 28. DE TRIPlici VINCULO AMORIS. 29. DE ORIGINE SECTARUM, and DE NOVIS ORDINIBUS, are the same tract under different titles. A part of this tract is in the Imperial Library at Vienna, intitled, DE SECTARUM PERFIDIA. 30. SUMMA THEOLOGICA. This title appears in a very ancient manuscript catalogue of Wycliffe's writings, which is in the Imperial Library at Vienna. The work here called SUMMA THEOLOGICA, is described as consisting of twelve chapters, the titles of which are as follows :—1. DE MANDATIS. 2. DE STATU INNOCENTIÆ. 3, 4, 5. DE DOMINO. 6. DE VERITATE SCRIPTURÆ. 7. DE ECCLESIA. 8. DE OFFICIO REGIS. 9. DE POSTATE PAPÆ. 10. DE SIMONIA. 11. DE APOSTASIA. 12. DE BLASPHEMIA.

The following are titles of extinct works, or different names given to some of the preceding treatises. They are found in the lists published by Bale, Tanner and subsequent writers, with no other description than is here given : and they appear to have been, for the most part, treatises or tracts on grammar, philosophy, and a variety of scholastic questions.

LXX. 1. QUÆSTIONES LOGICALES. 2. LOGICA DE SINGULIS. 3. LOGICA DE AGGREGATIS. 4. DE PROPOSITIONIBUS TEMPORALIBUS. Sequitur jam ultimo de proposit. 5. DE INSOLUBILIBUS. 6. DE EXCLUSIVIS ET EXCEPTIVIS. Secundarie superius est promissum. 7. DE CAUSALIBUS. Pertractandum venit de causalibus. 8. DE COMPARATIVIS. Consequens est ad dicta superad. 9. DE CONDITIONALIBUS. Primo supponitur omnem hypotheti. 10. DE DISJUNCTIVIS. Tertio sequitur de disjunctivis. 11. DE COPULATIVIS ET RELATIVIS. Sequitur de copulativis pertract. 12. GRAMMATICÆ TROPI. 13. METAPHYSICA VULGARIS. 14. DE UNIVERSO REALI. 15. METAPHYSICA NOVELLA. 16. DE SUMMA INTELLECTUALIUM. 17. DE FORMIS IDEALIBUS. 18. DE SPIRITU QUOLIBET. 19. DE SPECIEBUS HYPOTHETICIS. 20. DE ESSE INTELLIGIBILI CREATURÆ. 21. DE ESSE SUO PROLIPO. 22. DE ARTE SOPHISTICA. 23. DE UNA COMMUNIS GENERIS ESSENTIA. DE ESSENTIA ACCIDENTIUM. 25. DE TEMPORIS AMPLI-



ATIONE. 26. DE PHYSICA NATURALI. 27. DE INTENTIONE PHYSICA. 28. DE MATERIAE FORMA. cum materia et forma sint uni. 29. DE MATERIA CELESTIUM. 30. DE RARITATE ET DENSITATE. Videtur ex tertio sequi quod nihil. 31. DE MOTU LOCALI. Sequitur de localibus pertract. 32. DE VELOCITATE MOTUS LOCALIS. Tam ultimo restat videre quid. 33. DE CENTRO INFINITI.

The pieces thus described, appear to have been treatises, or, more probably, short tracts, or detailed parts of treatises, on grammar, logic, and philosophy, embracing, as before intimated, such topics as are found in the first and second books of the *Triologus*. The titles which follow denote works more strictly theological, and some of them, no doubt, exhibited many of the distinctive opinions of the Reformer.

34. *DIALOGUS DE FRATRIBUS*. 35. *JOHANNES A RURE CONTRA FRATRES*. Ego Johannes a rure Deum verum precor. 36. *DE CHARITATE FRATERNA*. Primum cum quolibet homine qui. 37. *DÆMONUM ÆSTUS IN SUBVERTENDA RELIGIONE*. Ut omnipotens Deus homines disponit. 38. *DE DIABOLO MILLENARIO*. Cum consummati fuerint mille anni. 39. *DE PERVERSO ANTI-CHRISTI DOGMATE*. Cum puri concionatores doceant Dei verbum. 40. *DEFENSIO CONTRA IMPIOS*. Evangelii predicationem lites suscipere. 41. *CONTRA P. STOKES*. 42. *RESPONSIO AD ARGUMENTA MONACHI DE SALLEY*. 43. *CONTRA MONACHUM DUNELMENSEM*. 44. *DE UNITATE CHRISTI*. 45. *DE UNICO SALUTIS AGNO*. 46. *CHRISTUS ALIUS NON EXPECTANDUS*. 47. *DE HUMANITATE CHRISTI*. 48. *DE DEFECTIOE A CHRISTO*. 49. *DE FIDE ET PERFIDIA*. 50. *DE FIDE SACRAMENTORUM*. 51. *DE FIDE EVANGELII*. 52. *CONSTITUTIONES ECCLESIAE*. 53. *DE CENSURIS ECCLESIAE*. Quantum ad excommunicationem attingit. 54. *DE SACERDOTIO LEVITICO*. 55. *DE SACERDOTIO CHRISTI*. 56. *DE STATUENDIS PASTORIBUS PER PLEBEM*. 57. *SPECULUM CLERI PER DIALOGUM*. Sed adhuc arguitur si clerus sic. 58. *DE NON SAGINANDIS SACERDOTIBUS*. Cavete qui sacerdotes otio sustinetis, 59. *DE MINISTRORUM CONJUGIO*. Fuit in diebus Herodis Sacerdos. 60. *COGENDI SACERDOTES AD HONESTATEM*. Apertam eruditionem in Dei lege. 61. *DE RITIBUS SACRAMENTORUM*. 62. *DE QUIDDITATE HOSTIÆ CONSECRATÆ*. 63. *DE QUINTUPLICI EVANGELIO*. 64. *DETERMINATIONES QUÆDAM*. 65. *DE TRINITATE*. Superest investigare de distinctione. 66. *DE EXCOMMUNICATIS ABSOLVENDIS*. Quoniam sub poena excommunicationis. 67. *DISTINCTIONES RERUM THEOLOGICARUM*. 68. *DE FONTE ERRORUM*. 69. *DE FALSATORIBUS LEGIS DIVINÆ*. Postquam interpretes subdoli legem. 70. *DE IMMORTALITATE ANIMÆ*. 71. *CEREMONIARUM CHRONICON*. 72. *DE CESSATIONE LEGALIUM*. Redeundo autem ad propositum de. 73. *DE DILECTIONE*. In quolibet homine peccatore. 74. *CONCORDANTIÆ DOCTORUM*. 75. *DE CONTRARIETATE DUORUM DOMINORUM*. Sicut est unus, verus et summus. 76. *DE LEGE DIVINA*. Ut de legibus loquar Christianorum. 77. *DE NECESSITATE FUTURORUM*. 78. *DE OPERIBUS SPIRITUALIBUS*. Quia parœcianos spiritualibus. 79. *DE OPERIBUS CORPORALIBUS*. Si certus esset homo quod in. 80. *DE ORDINE CHRISTIANO*. 81. *DE ORDINARIA LAICORUM*. 82. *DE ORDINE SACERDOTALI*. Quia presbyterorum ordo instituitur. 83. *DE PURGATORIO*.

PIORUM. Dona eis, Domine, requiem semper. 84. POSITIONES VARIE. 85. REPLICATIONES ET POSITIONES. 86. DE PRÆSCITO AD BEATITUDINEM. 87. DE QUATERNARIO DOCTORUM. 88. DE RELIGIOSIS PRIVATIS. Omnes Christiani in spiritus fervore. 89. DE STUDIO LECTIONIS. Malum est in eis perseverare ea. 90. DE SERVITUTE CIVILI. Cum secundum philosophos sit relativorum. 91. THEOLOGIE PLACITA. 92. DE VIRTUTE ORANDI. Ut sabbatizatio nostra sit Deo acceptabilis. 93. CONTRA MONACHUM DE ST. ALBANO. 94. DE COMPOSITIONE HOMINIS. Tria movent me ad tractandum. 95. DE HOMINE MISERO. 96. SCHOLIA SCRIPTURARUM. 98. GLOSSÆ VULGARES. 99. GLOSSÆ MANUALES. 100. GLOSSA NOVELLA. 101. COMMENTARII VULGARIS. Stabat Johannes, et ex discipulis. 102. LECTIONES IN DANIELEM. 103. DE DOTATIONE ECCLESIE, and DE DOTATIONE CÆSAREA are the different titles of the same work, beginning,—Utrum clerus debuerit dotationem. 104. DE ANTICHRISTO ET MEMBRIS. Quemadmodum Dominus Jesus ordinavit. 105. ITERUM DE ANTICHRISTO. Nota quod Antichristus 4 corn. 106. SPECULUM MILITANTIS ECCLESIE. Cum identitas mater sit fastidii. 107. DE PERFECTIONE EVANGELICA. Primo fratres dicunt suam religionem. 108. DE OFFICIO PASTORALI. Cum duplex debeat esse officium. 109. DE SIMONIA SACERDOTUM. Heu magni sacerdotes in tenebris. 110. SUPER PENITENTIIS INJUNGENDIS. Pro eo quod curatorum officium sit. 111. DE DIVITE APUD MARCUM. Cum egressus esset in viam salvator. 112. DE REMISSIONE FRATERNA. Si autem peccaverit in te frater. 113. DE TRIBUS SAGITTIS. Quisquis mente tenere cupit quid. 114. DE ECCLESIA CATHOLICA. Sunt sacerdotes qui certis rationibus. 115. DE MANDATIS DIVINIS. Præmissa Sententia de Domino. 116. CONCIONES DE MORTE. Beati qui in domino moriuntur. 117. DE PECCATIS FUGIENDIS. Dum fides nos doceat malum quodlibet. 118. DE ABLATIS RESTITUENDIS. Quæritur 1<sup>mo</sup> utrum omnium rerum. 119. DE SEDUCTIONE SIMPLICIUM. Septem sunt quibus decipiuntur simplices, 120. DE OCIO ET MENDICITATE. A manuum labore excusantur fratres. 121. IN SYMBOLUM FIDEI. Certum est fidem esse omnium virtutum. 122. SUPER SALUTATIONE ANGELICA. Solent homines Christiparam salutare. 123. AD SIMPLICES SACERDOTES. Videtur meritorium bonos colere. 124. AD QUINQUE QUÆSTIONES, Quidam fidelis in Domino quærit. 125. SUPPLEMENTUM TRIALOGI. 126. DE TRINO AMORIS VINCULO. 127. CONTRA CONSILIUM TERRÆ MOTUS. 128. DE SOLUTIONE SATANÆ. 129. DE SPIRITU QUOLIBET. 130. OMNIS PLANTATIO. 131. SI QUIS SITIT. 132. DE CONFESSIOE LATINORUM. 133. DE CHRISTIANORUM BAPTISMO. 134. DE CLAVIBUS REGNI DEI. 135. DE CLAVIUM POTESTATE. 136. DE HOMINE MISERO. 137. CONTRA CRUCIATUM PAPÆ. 138. DE LEGIBUS ET VENENO. 139. COLLECTIONES CONTRA DOMINICANOS. 140. RESPONSIONES ARGUMENTORUM. 141. AD RATIONES KYNINGHAM. 142. CONTRA BYNHAMUM MONACHUM. 143. DE BULLIS PAPALIBUS. 145. DE VERITATE ET MENDACIO. 146. DE PREVARICATIONE PRECEPTORUM. 147. DIALOGORUM SUORUM. 148. DE VERA INNOCENTIA. 149. DE VII. DONIS SPIRITUS SANCTI. 150. DE VERTUTIBUS PSEUDO CLERI. 151. OF WEDLOCK. 152. OF THE LIFE OF THE VIRGIN MARY.



## APPENDIX.

### *Documents and Notes.*

#### A. *page 8.*

For the Extract below, from the Durham Register, showing the religious faith of the Wycliffes in 1423, the Author is indebted to the Rev. James Raine, M.A., of Durham.

#### *Testamentum Domini Roberti Wyclyf quondam Rectoris de Rudby.*

IN Dei nomine, Amen—8 Sep. 1423. Ego Robertus de Wyclyf, Rector Ecclesiæ Par. de Rudby, Eboracensis Dioceseos, sanæ memoriæ, omnes donationes causa mortis per me ante datam presentium factas de revoco ea ceptis certis legatis per me quibusdam personis, &c. in ultimo meo eulogio assignatis, quæ quidem legata sunt inclusa in quodam rotulo sigillo meo signato : et testamentum meum ultimum, &c. condo, &c. in hunc modum. In primis commendo animam meam Deo omnipotenti Beatæ Mariæ et omnibus sanctis corpusque meum depeliendum ubi contigerit me decedere ab hac vita vel ubi executores mei disposuerint illud sepeliri. Volo tamen quod corpus meum simpliciori modo quo honestè possit tradatur sepulturæ. Ac quod omnia et singula debita mea seu debenda ratione ultimi vale mei ipsi Ecclesiæ integre persolvantur. Item volo quod viginti libræ dentur duobus capellanis celebraturis pro animâ meâ animabusque patris mei et matris et omnium benefactorum meorum et pro animabus omnium illorum pro quibus teneor et sum oneratus enotare. Et volo quod Johannes de Midelton sit unus de predictis capellanis, et quod celebret ut predicatur per triennium ubicunque voluerit, capiens pro singulo anno centum solidos de summa viginti librarum predictarum. Et volo quod alius capellanus celebret per annum integrum immediate post decessum meum ubi corpus meum fuerit humatum capiens residuum summæ antedictæ. Item lego ad reparationem quatuor Ecclesiarum, videli-



cet Rudby, Sancti Rumaldi, Kyrkebyrawynswath et Wyclif cuilibet illarum xl<sup>s</sup>. Item lego cuilibet Moniali de Nun Appilton, ii<sup>s</sup>. Item lego pro . . . . seu ornamentis emendandis infra cancellum Ecclesiæ de Wyclif, xl<sup>s</sup>. Item lego xl<sup>s</sup>. distribuendos pauperibus infra parochiam de Wyclif. Item lego ad reparationem pontis de Rudby, xx<sup>s</sup>. Item lego cuilibet capellanorum stipendiariorum Rectoriæ de Rudby celebranti ad capellas infra parochiam de Rudby vi<sup>s</sup>. viii<sup>d</sup>. Item lego cuilibet capellano et cuilibet fratri hospitalis de Kepier vi<sup>s</sup>. viii<sup>d</sup>. Item lego cuilibet pauperi scolari sedenti ad skepham infra aulam predicti hospitalis iii<sup>s</sup>. Item lego Enmotæ Mylner, Isotæ Sollay et Christianæ Kendall videlicet cuilibet illarum vi<sup>s</sup>. viii<sup>d</sup>. Item lego cuilibet ordini Fratrum mendicantium videlicet Allerton Richemond, et Hertilpole xx<sup>s</sup>. et Fratribus de Zarme xxvi<sup>s</sup>. viii<sup>d</sup>. Et lego cuilibet servienti meo trans-eunti ad carucam et custodienti averia mea ultra salaria sua iii<sup>s</sup>. iv<sup>d</sup>. Et residuum vero summæ c librarum de quibus condo testamentum meum ac etiam omnium et singulorum bonorum meorum mobilium et mihi de quibus-cunque personis debitorem do et lego executoribus meis ut et ipsi inde provideant faciant et disponant pro salute animæ meæ secundum quod eis videbitur melius expedire. Et ad hoc testamentum meum bene et fideliter perficiendum et implendum ordino et constituo Christopherum de Boynton Henricum Nersefeld Johannem de Midelton capellanum et Thomam Nele executores meos et unicunque illorum xli. pro labore suo assigno. Et super visores hujus testamenti ordino et constituo Johannem Langton militem manentem juxta Shirburne in Elvet et Robertum de Eure Com. Dunelm. In cujus rei testimonium huic presenti testamento sigillum meum opposui. His testibus Johanne Runhcorne capellano Thoma Tange et Roberto Berehalgh notariis publicis Thoma Morpath et Alano Shirebum capellanis. Data apud Kepier supradict, die et anno Domini supradictis.—From the Register of T. Langley, bishop of Durham, fol. 115.

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*B. page 49.*

The tract intitled 'The Last Age of the Church,' has been printed and edited by Dr. Todd of Dublin, (University Press, 1840). The same gentleman has edited a work of much greater extent, intitled in its first page, 'An Apology for the Lollard doctrines attributed to Wickliffe'—and in the headings of the pages of the treatise it is designated, 'Wickliffe's Apology.' This last treatise is one of a series printed by the Camden Society.

It has appeared, as I think, in these pages, that the 'Last Age of the Church,' should never have been attributed to Wycliffe; and I have demonstrated elsewhere, that the 'Lollard's Apology,' ought not to have been described, for a moment, as 'Wickliffe's Apology,' by a critic of Dr. Todd's

pretensions. The reader who may feel at all curious about this latter point is referred to a paper in the *Eclectic Review* of January 1843, where the evidence in relation to it is given.

It has been the pleasure of Dr. Todd to be very assiduous in endeavouring to detract from the merit of my humble labours in this field. In printing these MSS. his object has been to show how necessary it is that the writings of Wycliffe should be all printed, if any satisfactory judgment is to be formed as to his character and history. It is singular that the first manuscript published with this view should be one taking with it such strong evidence of being no Wycliffe manuscript at all; that the second should be manifestly the production of another hand and of a later time; and that the same mistake should have been repeated as to a third treatise, in the case of one of the three treatises recently published by the same editor. So that, as I have elsewhere said, of five pieces printed by Dr. Todd as from the pen of Wycliffe, two only are his. I have no wish to speak disrespectfully of Dr. Todd; but, he may be sure of it, his genius as a critic is not of the order strictly necessary to a successful editing of the writings of Wycliffe. He is at home in the minute, but this subject demands not only minutiae, but penetration and breadth.

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*C. page 53.*

*From the Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. ii. 1844, p. 146, 147.*

“In compiling a History of the Palace of Mayfield, in Sussex, formerly one of the numerous residences of the Archbishop of Canterbury, (and of which notice is taken in the 46th volume of your Magazine, p. 464), I had occasion to consult the registers of the See, for the purpose of ascertaining the early vicars of that parish, which lies within the peculiar jurisdiction of the Archbishop; and I was not a little surprised to find in the year 1361, and on the 12th Cal. August, (21 July) John Wickliffe collated to the vicarage by Archbishop Islip, the prelate who, rather more than four years after, is stated to have preferred John Wickliffe the Reformer to be warden of his then lately founded Hall of Canterbury at Oxford. Islip's deed of appointment bears date *at Mayfield*, 5 id. Dec. (9th Dec.) 1365, at which place he had been resident, with little intermission, from the time at which (as before mentioned), he collated John Wickliffe vicar, in 1361; and from the manner in which he speaks of the person whom he had appointed to the wardenship, as a man in whose ‘fidelity, circumspection and industry he much confided,’

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<sup>1</sup> Wood's *Antiq. Oxon.* Vol. I. p. 484.



and whom he called to that office on account of the honesty of his life, his laudable conversation, and his knowledge of letters,<sup>1</sup> it is evident that he was then well known to him, and that the words are something more than mere form. Upon examining the documents appointing the vicar of Mayfield,<sup>1</sup> and the warden of Canterbury Hall,<sup>2</sup> I found the final syllable of the name to be *clyve* in both instances; and although the orthography of a name at this period of time is very uncertain, still as connected with what I have hereafter to state, it is worthy of observation, that *such* is the spelling of the name attributed to the Master of Canterbury Hall, in 1361 and 1365, whilst the name of the Master of Baliol in 1361<sup>3</sup> and 1368,<sup>4</sup> is spelt with the last syllable *lif* or *liffe*—the spelling invariably attributed to the Reformer's name in all original evidences concerning him.

“ If, under these circumstances, any doubt remained that the vicar of Mayfield had, from the constant intercourse which had subsisted between them for four years, been appointed by his patron to the wardenship of Canterbury Hall, upon his deposition of Wodehull the monk, and his associates, it would entirely have vanished upon finding further that Islip, at the period of his decease in April 1366, a few months after Wickliffe's appointment, was about to appropriate towards the support of the master or warden, the rectory of the parish of Mayfield, which he had not thought of doing upon his appointment of Wodehull in 1363, but his death occurred before any such appropriation could be made. An earlier trace of the Reformer's preferment in the church, than any hitherto known of him, was thus thought to be clearly established; for, having identified the Vicar of Mayfield with the Warden of Canterbury—a preferment attributed to him by all who ever wrote concerning his life and actions,<sup>5</sup> I had little idea of finding that, although the Vicar of Mayfield and the Warden of Canterbury were one, the Warden of Canterbury Hall and the Reformer were two distinct individuals. Such, however, proves to have been the case; for, upon further search into the Archbishop's records, it was found that in 1380, the Vicar of Mayfield exchanged that preferment for Horsted Kaynes, in the same county,<sup>6</sup> and that he died in 1383, Rector of Horsted Kaynes, and Prebendary of Chichester; his Will being dated 12, and proved the 21st of November in that year,<sup>7</sup> only the year previous to the decease of the Rector of Lutterworth.”

\* \* But the passage cited in page 62 of this volume, is, as we have shown, decisive as to the fact that the Wycliffe of Canterbury Hall *was* Wycliffe the Reformer. All the papers which follow, from 1 to 9, relate to the matter of this Wardenship.

<sup>1</sup> Reg. Islip, in Dioc. Cant. fol. 287 (b).

<sup>2</sup> Wood's Antiq. Oxon. (edit. 1674), Vol. I. 184.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Vol. III. p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Reg. Bockingham, in Dioc. Linc.

<sup>5</sup> See Wood, Lewis Gilpin, Vaughan, Le Bas.

<sup>6</sup> Reg. Sudbury, fol. 134 (a).

<sup>7</sup> Reg. Courtenay, in Dioc. Cant.



No. 1.

*Specialis Licentia Domini Regis Edwardii III. pro appropriatione Advocationis Ecclesiæ de Pageham, Aulæ Cantuariensi in Oxonia.*

Edwardus Dei gratia Rex Angliæ, Dominus Hiberniæ et Aquitaniæ, omnibus ad quos præsentēs hæ pervenerint, salutem. Sciatis quod de gratia nostra speciali, et ad devotam supplicationem venerabilis Patris Simonis Cant. Archiepiscopi totius Angliæ Primatis, et Apostolicæ sedis Legati pie desiderantis incrementum salubre cleri regni nostri propter multiplicationem doctrinæ salutaris, quæ jam per præsentem epidemiam noscitur plurimum defecisse, Concessimus et licentiam dedimus pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quantum in nobis est, eidem Archiepiscopo, quod ipse in Universitate Oxon. quandam Aulam sive Domum Aulam Cantuariensem vulgariter et communiter vocitandam, in qua certus erit numerus scholarium tam religiosorum quam secularium artibus scolasticis insistentium et Deo pro nobis et salute Regni nostri specialiter exorantium secundum formam ordinationis inde per eundem Archiepiscopum super hoc faciendæ, suis sumptibus erigere poterit et fundare, et eisdem scholaribus in perpetuum assignare, et in eventu quo Domus sive Aula sit fundata, et scolares in ea assignati fuerint, Advocationem Ecclesiæ de Pageham suæ jurisdictionis immediatæ, quæ est de advocatione sua propria, et de jure suo Archiepiscopali, et quæ de nobis tenetur in capite, ut dicitur, eisdem scholaribus, et successoribus suis dare possit, et etiam assignare, habendum et tenendum præfatis scholaribus et successoribus suis de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam et puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum; et eisdem scholaribus quod ipsi tam aulam quam advocationem prædictas a præfato Archiepiscopo recipere, et Ecclesiam illam appropriare, et eam sic appropriatam in proprios usus tenere possint sibi et successoribus suis prædictis, pro nobis et salute Regni nostri oraturi juxta ordinationem prædicti Archiepiscopi, de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam et puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum sicut prædictum est, Tenore præsentium similiter licentiam dedimus specialem, statuto de terris et tenementis ad manum mortuam non ponendis edito non obstante, Nolentes quod prædicti Archiepiscopus vel successores sui aut præfati scolares seu successores sui ratione præmissorum, seu statuti prædicti, aut pro eo quod dicta advocatio de nobis tenetur in capite, sicut prædictum est, per nos vel hæredes nostros Justitiæ Estaetores, Vicecomites, aut alios ballivos seu ministros nostros quoscunque occasionentur, molestentur in aliquo seu graventur. Salvis tamen nobis et hæredibus nostris, ac aliis capitalibus Dominis feodi illius servitiis inde debitis et consuetis. In cujus rei testimonium has literas nostras fieri fecimus patentes. Teste-meipso apud Westmonasterium xx°. die Octobris anno regni nostri tricesimo quinto.—MS. in Bibl. Lam. No. 104, fol.

## No. II.

*Charta Foundationis Aulæ Cantuariensis, et Donationis Manerii de Wodeford Lincoln. Dioceseos dictæ Foundationi.*

Sapientia Dei Patris per uterum Beatæ Virginis volens prodire in publicum sicut ætate proficere voluit sic gratiæ et sapientiæ suæ munera paulatim aliis proficiendo secundum processum ætatis suæ magis ac magis realiter ostendebat, ut alii qui ab ejus plenitudine fuerint particulariter sapientiam recepturi prius humiliter addicerent et proficiendo crescerent in doctrina, posteaque quod sic didicerint aliis salubriter revelarent. Quia igitur per sapientiam sic non absque sudore et laboribus adquisitam reguntur regna et in justitia confoventur, Ecclesia militans germinat et sua diffundit tentoria: Nos Simon permissione Divina Cantuariensis Archiepiscopus totius Angliæ Primas et Apostolicæ sedis Legatus, ad hæc sepius revolventes intima cordis nostri, ac considerantes viros in omni scientia doctos et expertos in epidinnis præteritis plurimum defecisse, paucissimosque propter defectum exhibitionis ad præsens insistere studio literarum, de magnificæ Trinitatis gratia, et meritis beati Thomæ martyris patroni nostri firmiter confidentes, de bonis nobis a Deo collatis Aulam quandam in Universitate Oxon. et nostræ provinciæ de consensu et licentia serenissimi principis Domini Edwardi Regis Angliæ illustris, in loco quem ad hoc nostris sumptibus comparavimus, construximus et fundavimus, quam pro duodenario studentium numero duximus ordinandum. In partem igitur dotis et sustentationis ipsius Collegii octo hospitia conductitia juxta situm loci in quo habitationem hujusmodi studentium assignavimus consistentia, quæ gravibus sumptibus nostris et expensis propterea specialiter adquisivimus per hanc Cartam nostram conferimus et donamus, et etiam assignamus: Maneriumque de Wodeford Lincoln. Dioceseos ad perdidectum Nepotem nostrum Willelmum de Islep spectans cum omnibus suis pertinentiis eidem collegio procuravimus assignari. Datum apud Maghfeld Idus Aprilis Anno Domini 1363, et nostræ Consecrationis xiv. —MS. in Bibl. Lam. No. 104, fol.

*Instrumentum præcedentis Cartæ.*

In Dei nomine, Amen. Per præsens publicum instrumentum omnibus innotescat, quod Anno ejusdem Domini 1363, secundum computationem Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ, Indictione secunda Pontificis sanctissimi in Christo Patris et Domini Domini Urbani digna Dei providentia Papæ Quinti anno secundo, mensis Februarii die quarto, coram Reverendo in Christo Patre Domino



Simone Dei gratia Cant. Archiepiscopo, totius Angliæ Primate, et Apostolicæ sedis Legato, in Camera sua infra Manerium suum apud Cherryng Cant. Dioceseos personaliter constituto, producta fuit, exhibita et lecta quædam carta ipsius patris sigillo mei notarii subscripto satis noto consignata, quam idem Dominus Archiepiscopus asseruit se fecisse, et contenta in eadem rata, grata et firma se habere velle perpetuis temporibus valiturum: Cujus quidem Cartæ tenor de verbo ad verbum sequitur in hæc verba. *Sapientia Dei Patris per uterum Beatæ Virginis volens prodire, &c.* Consecrationis xiv. acta fuerunt hæc anno indictionis Pontificiæ, mense, die et loco prædictis præsentibus venerabili in Christo Patre Domino Willelmo Dei gratia Episcopo Roffensi, Magistris Nichalao de Chaddesden, Legum Doctore Canonico Ecclesiæ Lichfieldensis, Cancellario dicti Domini Archiepiscopi, Willelmo Tankerville Rectore Ecclesiæ de Lawfar London. Johanne Barbo Clerico Roffensis Dioceseos testibus ad præmissum rogatis.

Et Ego Richardus Wodelond de Calceto Clericus Cicestrensis Dioceseos, notarius Apostolica auctoritate publicus, productioni, exhibitioni, et lecturæ Cartæ prædictæ assertioni et ratihabitioni dicti Domini Archiepiscopi ac omnibus et singulis prout superius scribuntur et recitantur una cum præfatis testibus interfui, eaque omnia et singula sic vidi fieri et audiui veramque copiam sive transcriptum ipsius Cartæ superius descriptæ aliis negotiis occupatus per alium scribi feci, et hic me subscripsi et signum meum apposui præsentibus consuetum.—MS. in Bibl. Lam. No. 104, fol.

### No. III.

#### *Willelmi de Islep confirmatio prædictæ Donationis Manerii de Wodeford.*

Sciant præsentis et futuri quod Ego Wellelmus de Islep ad instantiam Domini mei Domini Simonis Dei gratis Cant. Archiepiscopi totius Angliæ Primatis et Apostolicæ sedis Legati, dedi, concessi, et hac præsentis carta mea confirmavi Custodi et Clericis Aulæ Collegiatæ Cant. per ipsum Dominum meum in Universitate Oxon, noviter fundatæ, Manerium meum quod habeo in Wodeford cum omnibus suis pertinentiis in Comitatu Northampton, habendum et tenendum prædictum Manerium cum omnibus suis terris, pratis pascuis, pasturis, redditibus, homagiis, servitiis, stagnis, vivariis, aquis molendinis, gardinis, columbariis cum omnibus aliis suis pertinentiis prædictis, Custodi et Clericis et eorum successoribus in perpetuum tenendum de capitalibus Dominis feodi per servitia inde debita, et de Jure consueta. In cujus rei testimonium sigillum meum præsentibus apposui, his testibus, venerabili in Christo Patre Domino Willelmo Dei gratia Roffensi Episcopo, Magistro Nicholao de Chaddesden Legum Doctore Cancellario, Domino Johanne Waleys milite, Dominis Thoma de Wolton seneschallo terrarum et Willelmo Islep cruciferario dicti Domini Archiepiscopi et multis aliis. Et ad majorem



securitatem præmissorum Ego Willelmus de Islep supradictus præsentem cartam subscriptione et signi appositione Magistri Richardi Wodeland Clerici Notarii auctoritate Apostolica publici ad requisitionem meam specialem feci et obtinui communiri. Datum apud Maghefeld quarto die mensis Junii anno Domini millesimo cccLXIII. et anno Regni Regis tertii post conquestum xxxvii.

Et Ego Richardus Wodeland de calceto Clericus Cicesterensis Dioceseos Notarius Apostolica auctoritate publicus dationi, et confirmationi, et concessioni prædictis, et sigilli appositioni cartæ prædictæ una cum suprascriptis testibus, loco, die, mense et anno Domini supradictis, indictione prima Pontificis sanctissimi in Christo Patris et Domini Domini Urbani digna Dei providentia Papæ quinti anno primo, præsens interfui et præfatum Willelmum de Islep dictam cartam perlegere audiui, et ad rogatum dicti Willelmi hic me subscripsi, et signum meum apposui præsentibus consuetum in testimonium præmissorum—MS. in Bibl. Lam. No. 104. fol.

## No. IV.

*Instrumentum Collationis Johannis de Wychlyve Guardianatui Aulæ Cantuariensis in Universitate Oxoniæ.*

Simon, &c. Dilecto filio Magistro Johanni de Wychlyve salutem, Ad vitæ tuæ et conversationis laudabilis honestatem, literarumque scientiam, quibus personam tuam in artibus magistratum altissimus insignivit, mentis nostræ oculos dirigentes, ac de tuis fidelitate, circumspectione, et industria plurimum confidentes, in custodem Aulæ nostræ Cantuar, per nos noviter Oxoniæ fundatæ te præficimus, tibi que curam et administrationem custodiæ hujusmodi incumbentes juxta ordinationem nostram in hac parte committimus per præsentem, reservata nobis receptione juramenti corporalis per te nobis præstandi debiti in hac parte. Dat. apud Maghefeld vº idus Decemb. anno Domini mcccLXV. et nostræ xvi.—Historia et Ant. Oxon. p. 184. Ex Registro Islep in Archivis Lambethanis, fol. 306.

## No. V.

*Verba Ordinationis quoad Custodem Aulæ Cantuar. Domino Archiepiscopo nominandum.*

———— et debet ipse præfici sicut cæteri monachi officarii dictæ Ecclesiæ per Dominum Archiepiscopum præficiendi viz. Prior et Capitulum eligent de toto Capitulo tres personas ydoneas et meliores in religione et scientia ad dictam Curam, et eos in scriptura communi Domino Archiepis-

copo nominabunt quorum unum ex illis sic nominatis quem voluerit Archiepiscopus præficiet in Custodem, Curam et Administrationem tam spiritualium quam temporalium ad ipsam Aulam pertinentium sibi plenius committendo.—Eccl. Christ. Cant. Reg. K. fol. 67.

No. VI.

*Nominatio Custodis Aulæ Cant. noviter fundatæ in Universitate Oxon. per Reverendum Patrem Dominum Simonem de Islep Archiepiscopum Cantuariensem.*

Reverendo in Christo Patri ac Domino, Domino Simoni Dei gratia Cant. Archiepiscopo totius Angliæ Primati, et Apostolicæ sedis Legato, Vestri humiles et devoti Prior et Capitulum Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. obedientiam, reverentiam et honorem. Ad curam et officium Custodis Aulæ Cantaur. in Universit. Oxon. per vos noviter fundatæ Fratres Henricum de Wodhulle sacre paginæ Doctorem, Johannem de Redyngate et Willielmum Rychemond nostros confratres et commonachos Vobis juxta formam et effectum Ordinationis vestræ factæ in hac parte, Tenore presentium nominamus. Supplicantis quatinus unem ex illis tribus sic nominatis quem volueritis in Custodem dictæ Aulæ præficere, et eidem curam et administrationem tam spiritualium quam temporalium ad ipsam Aulam pertinentium committere dignetur vestra paternitas reverenda, quam ad Ecclesiæ suæ Regimen conservet in prosperis Trinitas indivisa. Dat. sub sigillo nostro communi in Domo nostra Capitulari Cant. XIII die Martii anno Domini millesimo ccc<sup>mo</sup>. LXII<sup>do</sup>.

No. VII.

Johannes de Radyngate Monachus Cant. factus est Custos Aulæ Cant. Oxon. a Simone Langham Archiepiscopo Cant. Anno. 1367°. 11 Cal. Apr. Mandatum tamen revocatum est ab Arch°. x Cal. Maii sequentis et Henricus de Wodhall Monachus Cant. factus Custos directo ad Joannem Wycliff et cæteros scholares Aulæ Cant. mandato ut obedirent ei.—Regist. Langham. fol. 98.

No. VIII.

*Mandatum Apostolicum ad exequendam sententiam Cardinaliis Andruyni contra Wiclyffum.*

Urbanus Episcopus servus servorum Dei, venerabili fratri Episcopo Londoniensi, et dilectis filiis Abbati Monasterii sancti Albani, Lincoln. Dio-



ceseos, ac Archidiacono Oxon. in Ecclesia Lincoln. Salutem et Apostolicam benedictionem. Petitio dilectorum filiorum Prioris et Capituli Cant. Ecclesiæ ordinis Sancti Benedicti nobis exhibita continebat quod licet Collegium Aula Cant. nuncupatum scholarum Universitatis Oxon. Lincoln. Dioces. in quo quidem Collegio nonnulli Clerici et scolares esse consueverant, per unum ex Monachis dictæ Ecclesiæ qui Custos dicti Collegii esse tres alios Monachos dictæ Ecclesiæ secum habere debet, prout in ipsius Collegii fundatione extitit Canonice ordinatum, regi debent: Tamen dilecti filii Johannes de Wycliff, Willelmus Selbi, Willelmus Middleworth, Richardus Benger, Clerici Ebora-censis, Saresburiensis et Oxon. Dioceseos false asserentes dictum Collegium per Clericos seculares regi debere, dictumque Johannem fore Custodem Collegii supradicti, ac Henricum de Wodehall Monachum dictæ Cant. Ecclesiæ ac Custodem dicti Collegii, ac nonnullos Monachos dictæ Ecclesiæ cum præfato Henrico in dicto Collegio commorantes de ipso Collegio exclus-erunt, ipsosque Collegio ipsis ac bonis inibi existentibus in quorum pos-sessione iidem Henricus et alii Monachi existebant, spoliarunt, et nonnulla alia in ipsorum Monachorum præjudicium acceptarunt, nec non omnia bona dicti Collegii occupant, propter quod dilectus filius noster Simon t. t. sancti Sixti Presbyter Cardinalis tunc Archiepiscopus Cant. videns et prospiciens hujusmodi bona dicti Collegii per dictum Johannem et alios Clericos supra-dictos qui ipsius Johannis consortes erant dissipari, fructus parochialis Eccle-siæ de Pageham Cicestrens. Dioc. sub Jurisdictione Archiep. Cant. pro tempore existentis, consistentis sequestrari fecit, orta-que propterea inter Johannem de Wycliff et ejus consortes ex una parte et dictum Cardinalem super præmissis et eorum occasione ex altera, materia quæstionis. Nos tamen hujusmodi cum partes ipsæ in Romana Curia, sufficienter præsentis existerent, bonæ memoriæ Andruyno t. t. sancti Marcelli presbytero Car-dinali ad earum partium instantiam audiendam commisimus, et fine debito terminandam. Et quod idem Andruynus Cardinalis prout ei melius et utili-us pro statu dicti Collegii videretur expedire posset a dicto Collegio Clericos seculares amovere, vel si ei utilius videretur pro Collegio supradicto religiosos supradictos ab ipso Collegio auctoritate prædicta amovere, ita quod unicum et solum Collegium regularium vel secularium remaneret, cum potestate etiam in dicta causa simpliciter, et de plano, ac sine strepitu et figura judicii procedendi. Coram quo Magistris Richardo Bangero procuratore Johannis et ejus consortium prædictorum, ac Alberto de Mediolano per Magistrum Rogerum de Treton, procuratorem dictorum Simonis Cardinalis, nec non Prioris et Capituli prædictorum. Qui quidem Prior et Capitulum pro inter-esse suo ad causam hujusmodi veniebant, substituto donec eum revocaret prout eum ad hoc ab ipsis Simone Cardinale ac Priore et Capitulo sufficiens mandatum habebat in Judicio comparentibus tandem postquam inter partes ipsas coram eodem Cardinale ad nonnullos actus in causa hujusmodi pro-cessum fuerat, præfatus Richardus quandam petitionem summariam pro parte sua exhibuit in causa supradicta. Postmodum vero nos eidem Andruyno Card. commisimus ut in causa hujusmodi sola facti veritate inspecta proce-



dere, etiam terminis secundum stilum palatii Apostolici servari consuetis non servatis, postmodum vero præfatus Rogerus coram eodem Andruyno Card. in judicio comparens nonnullas positiones et articulos quandam petitionem summariam in eorum fine continentes pro parte sua tradidit in causa supradicta, ac deinde cum generales vacationes in dicta Curia de mandato nostro inditæ fuissent. Nos eidem Andruyno Cardinali commisimus ut in causa hujusmodi procedere et partes ipsas per suas literas portis Ecclesiæ Viterbiensis affigendas citare posset quociens opus esset, non obstantibus vacationibus supradictis. Idemque Andruynus Cardinalis ad ipsius Rogeri instantiam præfatum Johannem Wycliff et ejus consortes, cum dictus Richardus procurator in dicta curia diligenter perquisitus reperiri non posset per suas certi tenoris literas portis dictæ Ecclesiæ Viterbiensis affixas ad producendum et ad produci videndum omnia jura et munimenta quibus partes ipsæ vellent in causa hujusmodi uti, citari fecit ad certum peremptorium terminum competentem in quo præfatus Rogerus coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio comparens prædictorum citatorum non comparentium contumaciam actitavit et in ejus contumaciam nonnullas literas autenticas instrumenta publica et alia jura et munimenta quibus pro parte sua in hujusmodi causa voluit uti produxit, idemque Andruynus Cardinalis ad ipsius Rogeri instantiam prædictum Richardum tunc in prædicta Curia repertum ad dicendum contra eadem producta quidquid vellet per portarium suum juratum citari fecit ad certum peremptorium terminum competentem in quo præfatus Rogerus coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio comparens prædicti Ricardi non comparentis contumaciam accentuavit, præfatusque Andruynus Cardinalis ad dicti Rogeri instantiam prædictum Ricardum ad concludendum et concludi videndum in causa hujusmodi vel dicendum causam rationabilem quare in ea concludi non deberet, per portarium suum juratum citari fecit ad certum terminum peremptorium competentem, in quo Magistro Johanne Cheyne substituto de novo per dictum Rogerum donec eum revocaret, prout ad hoc a præfatis Dominis suis sufficiens mandatum habebat coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio, comparente, et dicti Ricardi non comparentis contumaciam actitante, et in ejus contumaciam in hujusmodi causa concludi petente, supradictus Andruynus Cardinalis reputans eundem Richardum quoad hoc, prout erat merito contumaciæ in ejus contumaciam cum dicto Johanne Cheyne in hujusmodi causa concludente, conclusit et habuit pro concluso. Subsequently vero præfatus Andruynus Cardinalis prædictos Johannem de Wycliff et ejus consortes, cum dictus Richardus procurator latitaret et diligenter perquisitus in præfata Curia reperiri non posset, ad suam in causa hujusmodi diffinitivam sententiam audiendam per suas certi tenoris literas portis dictæ Ecclesiæ Viterbiensis affixas citari fecit, ad competentem peremptoriam certam diem, in quo dicto Rogero coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio comparente, et dictorum citatorum non comparentium contumaciam accusante, et in eorum contumaciam sententiam ipsam ferri petente, memoratus Andruynus Cardinalis reputans eosdem citatos quoad actum hujusmodi, prout erant merito contumaces in eorum contumaciam

visis et diligenter inspectis omnibus et singulis actibus actitatis habitis et productis in causa hujusmodi coram eo, ipsisque cum diligentia recensitis et examinatis, habito super his consilio cum peritis per suam diffinitivam sententiam ordinavit, pronunciavit, decrevit et declaravit solos Monachos prædictæ Ecclesiæ Cant. Secularibus exclusis debere in dicto Collegio. Aula [Cantuar.] nuncupato, perpetuo remanere, ac exclusionem et spoliationem contra prædictos Monachos per dictum Johannem de Wyclyff et ejus consortes prædictos attemptatas fuisse, et esse, temerarias, injustas et de facto præsumptas, easque in quantum de facto processerint, revocandas et irritandas fore, et quantum in eo fuit revocavit et irritavit. Et Henricum ac alios Monachos supradictos sicut præmittitur, spoliatos et de facto exclusos ad Collegium nec non omnia bona mobilia et immobilia supradicta restituendos et reintegrandos fore, ac restituit et reintegravit, nec non fructuum sequestrationem ad utilitatem dictorum Monachorum relaxavit. Et insuper Johanni de Wyclyff et ejus consortibus supradictis supre præmissis perpetuum silentium imponendum fore et imposuit prout in instrumento publico inde confecto dilecti filii nostri Bernardi duodecim Apostolorum Presbyteri Cardinalis, cui nos præfato Andruyno Cardinali antequam instrumentum super hujusmodi sententiam confectum sigillasset vita functo, commissimus ut instrumentum sigillaret, sigillo munito plenius dicitur contineri. Nos itaque dictorum Prioris et Capituli supplicationibus inclinati hujusmodi diffinitivam sententiam utpote proinde latam, ratam habentes et gratam, eamque autoritate Apostolica confirmantes discretioni vestræ per Apostolica scripta mandamus, quatenus vos vel duo aut unus vestrum per vos vel alium seu alios sententiam ipsam executioni debite demandantes, eamque ubi et quando expedere videritis, auctoritate nostra solempniter publicantes Henricum et alios monachos prædictos ad dictum Collegium, Aula [Cant.] nuncupatum, nec non ejus bona mobilia et immobilia supradicta, amotis exinde dictis Johanne de Wyclyff et ejus consortibus prædictis, auctoritate nostra restituatis, et reintegratis, ac restitutos et reintegratos juxta illius exigentiam defendatis Contradictores per Censuram Ecclesiasticam apelacione postposita compescendo. Dat. Viterbii v. idus Maii Pontificatus nostri anno octavo.—MS. in. Bibl. Lam. No, 104, fol. A.D. 1370.

## No. IX.

*Regia Pardonatio omnium Foris facturarum Aula Cantuarien et eidem pertinentium, et Confirmatia Papalis Sententiæ Deprivationis Wicliffe.*

Edwardus Dei gratia Rex Angliæ et Franciæ et Dominus Hiberniæ; Omnibus ad quos præsentis literæ pervenerint salutem. Sciatis quod cum nuper et accepimus de gratia nostra speciali et ad devotam supplicationem Simonis tunc Archiepiscopi Cant. qui de Islep cognominatus extiterat pie



desiderantis incrementum salubre Cleri nostri propter multiplicationem doctrinæ salutaris per literas nostras patentes sub magno sigillo nostro concessimus et licentiam dederimus pro nobis et hæredibus nostris quantum in nobis erat eidem Archiepiscopo quod ipse in Universitate Oxon. quandam Aulam sive Domum Aulam Cant. vulgariter et communiter vocitandam, in qua certus foret numerus scolarium tam Religiosorum quam Secularium actibus scolasticis insistentium, et Deo pronobis et salute Regni nostri specialiter exorantium, secundum ordinationis formam inde per eundem Archiepiscopum super hoc faciendæ, suis sumptibus erigere possit et fundare, et eisdem scholaribus in perpetuum assignare, et in eventu quo Domus sive Aula sic fundata et scolares in ea assignati forent, advocacionem Ecclesiæ de Pageham Jurisdictionis ipsius Archiepiscopi immediatæ, quæ quidem Ecclesia de advocacione propria ejusdem Archiepiscopi, ut de jure suo Archiepiscopali extiterat, et quæ quidem Advocatio de nobis tenebatur in capite, ut dicebatur, eisdem scholaribus dare posse et etiam assignare habendum et tenendum præfatis scholaribus et successoribus suis de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum, et eisdem scholaribus quod ipsi tam Aulam quam advocacionem prædictas a præfato Archiepiscopo recipere, et Ecclesiam illam appropriare, et eam sic appropriatam in proprios usus tenere possent sibi et successoribus suis prædictis pro nobis et salute regni nostri oraturi juxta ordinationem prædicti Archiepiscopi de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum sicut prædictum est: Dictusque Archiepiscopus postmodum juxta dictam licentiam nostram quandam Aulam Collegiatam sub certo scolarium studentium numero in Universitate prædicta vocabulo Aulæ Cantuariensis erexerit, et fundaverit, certosque Monachos Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. unum videlicet Monachum Custodem Aulæ ejusdem, cæterosque scolares in eadem una cum certis aliis scholaribus secularibus in Aula prædicta ordinaverit et constituerit, et eis Aulam illam, nec non advocacionem prædictam dederit et assignaverit eisdem Custodi et Scholaribus et successoribus suis perpetuo possidendas, ipsique Custos et Scolares dictas Aulam et advocacionem a præfato Archiepiscopo receperint, ac Ecclesiam prædictam sibi et successoribus suis in proprios usus una cum Aula prædicta in perpetuum habendam appropriaverit, ac deinde *præter licentiam nostram supradictam* amotis omnino per prædictum Archiepiscopum dictis Custode et cæteris Monachis Scholaribus videlicet regularibus ab Aula prædicta, idem Archiepiscopus quandam scolarem Custodem dictæ Aulæ ac cæteros omnes scolares in eadem scolares duntaxat constituerit eisdem Custodi et Scholaribus secularibus duntaxat in proprios usus perpetuo possidendam dederit et assignaverit, ipsique Custos et Scolares seculares duntaxat Aulam et Ecclesiam prædictam ex tunc continuatis temporibus durante vita præfati Archiepiscopi possederit tam fructus dictæ Ecclesiæ quam alia bona ad Aulam prædictam spectantia usibus suis propriis applicaverit, et demum defuncto dicto Archiepiscopo et Reverendo in Christo Patre Simone t. t. sancti Sixti, Presbytero Cardinali tunc in



Archiepiscopum Cant. consecrato idem Archiepiscopus tunc Cardinalis fructus dictæ Ecclesiæ de Pageham sequestrari fecerit, orta que præterea inter dictos Custodem et Scholares seculares ex parte una et præfatum Cardinalem super præmissis, et eorum occasione ex altera materia contradictionis, appellationeque interposita, et habito inde processu, Romana Curia auctoritate Apostolica videlicet felicis recordationis Domini Urbani Papæ quinti per diffinitivam sententiam de facto ordinatum fuerit ibidem pronunciaverit, decreverit et declaraverit solos Monachos prædictæ Cantuariensis Ecclesiæ, secularibus exclusis, debere in dicto Collegio Aula nuncupato perpetuo remanere, nec non dictos Monachum Custodem ac alios Monachos Scholares sic de facto ut præmittitur a dicto Collegio ac bonis inibi existentibus in quorum possessione fuerant per amotionem hujusmodi et occupationem dictorum secularium Custodis et Scolariū secularium spoliatos et exclusos ad Collegium illud, nec non ad omnia bona supradicta, et omnia alia bona mobilia et immobilia dicti Collegii per eosdem secularem Custodem et Scholares seculares post amotionem prædictam occupata restituendos et reintegrandos fore, ac jam Dilecti nobis in Christo Prior et Conventus Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. antedictæ virtute dictorum ordinationis, procurationis, decreti et declarationis auctoritate Apostolica factorum uti præmittitur, quendam, ut asseriter, Commonachum suum ejusdem Ecclesiæ Christi Custodem dicti Collegii Aulæ nuncupati, ac certos alios Commonachos suos dictæ Ecclesiæ Christi scholares in eodem Collegio ordinaverint et constituerint, amotis dictis secularibus ab eodem penitus et exclusis, *contra formam licentiæ nostræ supradictæ*. Nos quanquam dicta advocatio Ecclesiæ de Pageham per aliquem progenitorum nostrorum una cum aliquibus prædiis seu tenementis in dotationem, fundationem seu alias in augmentationem Archiepiscopatus Cantuariensis, seu Ecclesiæ Christi Cantuar. antedictæ data, concessa seu assignata extiterat, volentes nihilominus ob devotionem sinceram quam ad dictam Ecclesiam Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. et beatum Thomam Martyrem quondam ejusdem Ecclesiæ Archiepiscopum, cujus corpus gloriose cathalogo sanctorum ascriptum quiescit honorabiliter in eadem, securitati tam dictorum Prioris et Conventus quam Commonachorum suorum, quos ipsi Prior et Conventus Custodem dicti Collegii et Scholares in eodem jam, ut præmittitur, ordinarunt, et in futurum ordinaverint, provide de gratia nostra speciali et pro ducentis marcis quos dicti Prior et Conventus nobis solverunt in hanaperio nostro perdonavimus omnes transgressionem factas nec non foris facturum si qua dictæ Aulæ cum pertinentiis et advocacionis prædictæ virtute statuti de terris et tenementis ad manum mortuam non ponendis editi vel alias nobis intensa fuerit in hac parte, dictamque sententiam, ordinationem, pronuntiationem, decretum et declarationem auctoritate Apostolica factam, ut prædictum est, et executionem eorundem pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quantum in nobis est, acceptamus, approbamus, ratificamus, et confirmamus, volentes, et concedentes pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quantum in nobis est, quod prædicti Custos et cæteri Scholares Regulares dicti Collegii Aulæ

Cant. nuncupati Monachi dictæ Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. et eorum successores per prædictos Priorem et Conventum constituti, et per eosdem Priorem et Conventum et eorum successores constituendi, seu alias loco amovendorum substituendi, actibus scolasticis juxta ordinationem ipsorum Prioris et Conventus et successorum suorum religiose insistentes Aulam prædictam, tenementaque in ipsa contenta cum pertinentiis, nec non Ecclesiam prædictam, et advocationem ejusdem in usus proprios ipsorum Custodis et scolarium Regularium teneant videlicet dictam Aulam, et prædicta tenementa cum pertinentiis, quæ de nobis in burgagium tenentur, ut dicitur, de nobis et hæredibus nostris, ac aliis Capitalibus Dominis feodi per servitia inde debita et consueta, et dictas Ecclesiam et advocationem de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam ad orandum specialiter pro salute animæ nostræ et pro animabus progenitorum nostrorum ac hæredum nostrorum in perpetuum sine occasione vel impedimento nostro vel hæredum nostrorum, Justitiæ Estretorum viæ aut aliorum ballivorum, seu ministrorum nostrorum vel hæredum nostrorum quorumcunque statuto vel forisfactura prædictis aut dictis, dotationem, concessionem, seu assignationem advocationis prædictæ per aliquem progenitorum nostrorum in dotationem, fundationem, vel alias in augmentationem Archiepiscopatus seu Ecclesiæ Christi prædictorum, seu dictam fundationem per præfatum Simonem de Islep quondam Archiepiscopum tam pro studentibus sive scholaribus Regularibus quam Secularibus factæ, ut præmittitur seu aliquo alio præmissorum non obstantibus. In cujus rei testimonium has literas nostras fieri fecimus patentes. Teste me ipso apud Westm. octavo die Aprilis Anno Regni nostri Angliæ quadragesimo sexto, Regni vero nostri Franciæ tricesimo tertio.—MS. in Bib. Lam. No. 104, fol. A.D. 1372.

\* \* \* Canterbury Hall was united with Christ Church, Oxford, in 1545. But scarcely any mention of Wycliffe is to be found in the archives of Christ Church, Balliol, or Merton. It is supposed that the hatred shown towards the memory of the Reformer by Archbishop Chichele, led to the destruction of documents in which his name appeared. The Lambeth Library contains the preceding papers relating to the appeal, but throws no further light on this piece of history. There is in the Balliol papers one entry which shows that one John Heugate was warden of Balliol, in 1366; the vacancy occasioned by Wycliffe's removal to Canterbury Hall in 1365, being thus filled. What is somewhat curious, there is another document at Balliol, which shows that there was a John de Wycliffe who was master of that College in 1340, when the Reformer could not have been more than sixteen years of age.



*F. page 115.*

It was my intention to have inserted the document referred to, in this place, but as the entire substance is given in the text, and as the paper has been several times printed, in Lewis, and in my *Life and Opinions of Wycliffe*, I have thought that it may be omitted.

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*G. page 203.*

These documents may be seen in Walsingham, Fox, Wilkins, Lewis, and in the Appendix to the *Life and Opinions of Wycliffe*—their insertion in this place would occupy large space to little purpose.

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*H. page 220.*

This paper contains nothing of value that is not given in the text. It may be seen in Fox, in Lewis, and in the Appendix to the *Life and Opinions of Wycliffe*.

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*I. page 245.**Conclusiones J. Wiclefi de Sacramento Altaris.*

1. Hostia consecrata quam videmus in Altari nec est Christus nec aliqua sui pars, sed efficax ejus signum.

2. Nullus viator sufficit oculo corporali, sed fide Christum videre in hostia consecrata.

3. Olim fuit fides Ecclesie Romane in professione Berengarii quod panis et vinum que remanent post benedictionem sunt hostia consecrata.

4. Eukaristia habet virtute verborum sacramentalium tam corpus quam sanguinem Christi vere et realiter ad <sup>1</sup>quemlibet ejus punctum.

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<sup>1</sup> Sic MS.



5. Transubstantiatio, ydemptificatio et impanatio quibus utuntur baptiste signorum in materia de eukaristia non sunt fundabiles in Scriptura.

6. Repugnat Sanctorum sententiis asserere quod sit accidens sine subjecto in hostia veritatis.

7. Sacramentum Eukaristie est in natura sua panis aut vinum, habens virtute verborum sacramentalium verum corpus et sanguinem Christi ad quemlibet ejus punctum.

8. Sacramentum Eukaristie est in figura corpus Christi et sanguis, in que transubstanciatur panis aut vinum cujus remanet post consecracionem aliquid licet quoad consideracionem fidelium sit sopita.

9. Quod accidens sit sine subjecto non est fundabile, sed si sic Deus adnichilatur et perit quilibet articulus fidei Christiane.

10. Quaecunque persona vel secta est nimis heretica que pertinaciter defenderit quod Sacramentum Altaris est panis per se existens in natura infinitum abjectior et imperfectior pane equino.

11. Quicumque pertinaciter defendet quod dictum Sacramentum sit accidens, qualitas, quantitas aut earum aggregatio incidit in heresim supra dictam.

12. Panis triticeus in quo solum licet conficere, est in natura infinitum perfectior pane fabino vel rationis, quorum uterque in natura est perfectior accidente.—MS. in Hyp. Bodl. 163.

No. II.

*Diffinitio facta per Cancellarium et Doctores Universitatis Oxonii, de Sacramento Altaris contra Opiniones Wycliffianas: alias Sententia Willielmi Cancellarii Oxon. contra M. J. Wycliff residentem in Cathedra.*

Willielmus de <sup>1</sup>Barton Cancellarius Universitatis Oxon. Omnibus dicte Universitatis filiis ad quos presens nostrum mandatum pervenerit, salutem, et mandatis nostris firmiter obedire. Ad nostrum non sine grandi displicentia pervenit auditum, quod cum <sup>2</sup>omnium heresium inventores, defensores, seu fautores, cum eorum <sup>3</sup>perniciis dogmatibus sint per sacros Canones sententia majoris Excommunicationis damnabiliter involuti, et sic a cunctis Catholicis rationabiliter evitandi: Nonnulli tamen maligni spiritus repleti concilio in insaniam mentis producti, molientes tunicam Domini <sup>4</sup>scilicet Sancte Ecclesie scindere unitatem, quasdam hereses olim ab Ecclesia solenniter condemnatas: Hiis diebus, proh dolor! innovant, et tam in ista Universitate ista quam extra publice dogmatizant; duo inter alia sua documenta pestifera asserentes,

<sup>1</sup> Berton.

<sup>2</sup> omnes.

<sup>3</sup> perniciosos.

<sup>4</sup> similiter.

primo, in Sacramento Altaris substantiam panis materialis et vini, quæ prius fuerunt ante consecrationem, post consecrationem realiter remanere. Secundo, quod execrabilius est auditu, in illo venerabili Sacramento non esse corpus Christi et sanguinem essentialiter, nec substantialiter, nec etiam corporaliter, sed figurative, seu tropice, sic quod Christus non est ibi veraciter in sua propria <sup>1</sup>persona corporali. Ex quibus documentis fides catholica periclitatur, devocio populi minoratur, et hec Universitas mater nostra non mediocriter diffamatur. Nos igitur advertentes quod assertiones hujusmodi per <sup>2</sup>tempus se deteriores haberent si diucius in hac Universitate sic conniventibus oculis tolerentur, convocavimus plures sacræ Theologiæ Doctores et Juris Canonici Professores quos periciores credidimus, et premissis assertionibus in eorum presentia patenter expositis ac diligenter discussis, tandem finaliter est compertum, et eorum <sup>3</sup>judiciis declaratum ipsas esse <sup>4</sup>errores atque determinationibus Ecclesiæ repugnantes, contradictoriasque earundem esse veritates Catholicas, et ex dictis sanctorum, et determinationibus Ecclesie manifeste sequentes; videlicet quod per verba Sacramentalia a sacerdote rite prolata panis et vinum in Altari in verum corpus Christi et sanguinem transubstantiantur seu substantialiter convertuntur, sic quod post consecrationem non remanent in illo venerabili Sacramento, panis materialis et vinum que prius secundum suas substantias seu naturas, sed <sup>5</sup>solum species earundem, sub quibus speciebus verum corpus Christi et sanguis realiter continentur, non solum figurative seu tropice, sed essentialiter, substantialiter ac corporaliter, sic quod Christus est ibi veraciter in sua propria presencia corporali, hoc credendum, hoc docendum, hoc contra omnes contradicentes viriliter defendendum. Hortamur igitur in Domino, et auctoritate nostra monemus primo, secundo et tertio, ac districtius inhibemus, pro prima monicione assignando unum diem; pro secunda alium diem; et pro tertia monicione Canonica ac peremptoria unum alium diem, ne quis de cetero cujuscunque gradus, status aut conditionis existat, premissas duas assertiones erroneas aut earum alteram, in scolis <sup>6</sup>vel extra scholas in hac Universitate publice teneat, doceat <sup>7</sup>aut defendat sub pena incarcerationis, et suspensionis ab omni actu scolastico, ac eciam sub pena excommunicationis majoris quam in omnes et singulos in hac parte rebelles et nostris monicionibus non parentes, lapsis ipsis tribus diebus pro monicione canonica assignatis, mora, culpa et offensa precedentibus, et id fieri merito exigentibus ferimus in his scriptis, quorum omnium absoluciones, et absolvendi potestatem, preterquam in mortis articulo, nobis et successoribus nostris specialiter reservamus.

Insuper ut homines quamvis non propter timorem late sententie <sup>8</sup>propter defectum audiencie a talibus doctrines illicitis retrahantur, et eorum opiniones erronee sopiantur, eadem auctoritate qua prius monemus primo, secundo, <sup>9</sup>tertio, ac districtius inhibemus, ne quis de cetero aliquem publice docentem, te-

<sup>1</sup> presentia.<sup>2</sup> partus.<sup>3</sup> judicio.<sup>4</sup> erroneas.<sup>5</sup> secundum.<sup>6</sup> aut.<sup>7</sup> seu.<sup>8</sup> adde saltem.<sup>9</sup> add. et.



nentem seu defendentem premissas duas asserciones erroneas aut earum alteram in scolis vel extra scolis in hac Universitate quovismodo audiat vel auscultet, sed statim sic docentem tanquam serpentem venenum pestiferum emittentem fugiat et abscedat, sub pena excommunicationis majoris, et omnes et singulos contravenientes non immerito fulmenande et sub penis aliis superius annotatis.

Nomina <sup>1</sup> Doctorum qui presenti decreto specialiter affuerunt, et eidem unanimiter consenserunt sunt hec.

Magister Johannes Lawndreyn sacre pagine professor et secularis.

Magister Henricus <sup>2</sup> Cronpe Abbas Monachus.

Magister Johannes Chessham de ordine predicatorum.

Magister Willielmus <sup>3</sup> Bruscombe de eodem ordine.

Magister Johannes Schypton de ordine Augustinorum.

Magister Johannes Tyssington de ordine Minorum.

Magister Johannes Loveye de ordine Carmelitarum.

Magister Johannes <sup>4</sup> Wellys Monachus de Ramesey.

Magister Johannes Wolverton de ordine predicatorum.

Magister Robertus <sup>5</sup> Rugge S. pagine professor et secularis.

Magister Joannes Moubray Doctor in utroque Jure.

Magister Joannes Gascoygne Doctor in Decretis.

Convocatis igitur prefatis Doctoribus<sup>6</sup> in eorum domum et plena deliberatione habita de premissis, ex omnium nostrum unanimi concilio et assensu, presens mandatum emanare decrevimus. In quorum omnium singulorum testimonium, sigillum officii<sup>7</sup> fecimus hiis opponi.—Spelman. vol. ii. p. 627. Ex. MS. Hyp. Bodl. 163.

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*J. page 247.*

See the extract from the Sudbury Register, relating to the proceedings in Oxford, as given in note L. p. 571.

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<sup>1</sup> *insere* autem.

<sup>5</sup> Rigge.

<sup>2</sup> Gromp.

<sup>6</sup> ut est dictum.

<sup>3</sup> Brustoumbe.

<sup>4</sup> Welles.

<sup>7</sup> *ins.* nostri.



## No. III.

K. page 267, 310.

*Confessio Magistri Johannis Wyccliff.*

Sepe confessus sum et adhuc confiteor quod idem corpus Christi in numero, quod fuit assumptum de Virgine, quod passum est in cruce, quod pro sancto triduo jacuit in sepulchro, quod tertia die resurrexit, quod post 40 dies ascendit in cœlum, et quod sedet perpetuo ad dextram Dei Patris; ipsum, inquam, idem corpus et eadem substantia est vere et realiter panis sacramentalis vel hostia consecrata quam fideles senciunt in manibus sacerdotis, cujus probacio est quia Christus qui mentiri non potest sic asserit. Non tamen audeo dicere quod corpus Christi sit essentialiter, substantialiter, corporaliter vel ydemptice ille panis sicut corpus Christi extensum est ille panis: Sed ipsum corpus non est extense vel dimensionaliter ille panis. Credimus enim quod triplex est modus essendi corpus Christi in hostia consecrata, scilicet, virtualis, spiritualis, et sacramentalis. Virtualis quo benefacit per totum suum dominum, secundum bona nature vel gratie. Modus autem essendi spiritualis est quo corpus Christi est in Eucharistia et Sanctis per gratiam. Et tercius est modus essendi sacramentalis quo corpus Christi singulariter in hostia consecrata, et sicut secundus modus perexigit primum; ita tercius modus secundum perexigit quia impossibile est prescitum carentem fide secundum justiciam presentem conficere. Qui ergo credit sive conficiat sive non conficiat manducavit, ut dicit Beatus Augustinus super Joannem Omelia 25. Et iste modus essendi spiritualis est verior in anima. Est eciam verior et realior quam prior modus essendi, vel secundum membrum secundi modi essendi in hostia consecrata, cum sit per se causa illius modi vel efficiens vel finalis, et per se causa est magis verius Ens suo causato. Modus autem essendi quo corpus Christi est in hostia est modus verus et realis, cum autorum numerus qui mentiri non potest dixit, hoc est corpus meum, et reliquit suis sacerdotibus virtutem similiter faciendi. Hoc autem totum ex fide scripturæ colligitur. Ideo Christus est specialiori modo in isto Sacramento quam in aliis. Cum sit simul veritas et figura, non est autem sic secundum alia sacramenta, patet iste miraculosus modus essendi sacramentalis. Cultores autem signorum nesciunt fundare quod in suo sacramento est realiter corpus Christi. Sed preter istos tres modos essendi sunt alii tres modi realiores et veriores quos corpus Christi appropriate habet in cœlo sc. modus essendi substantialiter, corporaliter et dimensionaliter. Et grosse concipientes non intelligunt alium modum essendi naturalis substantiæ præter illos. Illi autem sunt valde indispositi ad consipendum archana Eucharistiæ, et subtilitatem scripturæ. Ideo dico illis quod duo modi priores in substantia corporali coincidunt, non quod esse substantialiter consequitur

corpus Christi secundum rationem qua corpus Christi. Modus autem essendi dimensionaliter consequitur ad duos priores, sicut passio ad subjectum. Et quilibet istorum trium modorum erit realior et causa prior quam priores. Nullo alio istorum modorum trium est corpus Christi in Sacramento sed in cœlo: Quia tum feret corpus Christi septipedale in hostia. Sicut ergo corpus Christi est in illa hostia, sic est substantialiter, corporaliter ibidem, et dimensionaliter, attendendo ad modum hostie secundum naturam suam, et non attendendo ad corpus Christi et ad naturam suam, ut dictum est superius. Et ita conceditur quod corpus Christi est substantia corporalis in hostia consecrata. Sic istotercio modo in ista hostia secundum rationem qua est ista hostia, sed non secundum rationem qua corpus Christi. Et ita conceditur quod corpus Christi est quantumcunque varie quantificatum ibi cum sit quilibet pars quantitativa illius hostie, et tum non quantificatur aliqua hujusmodi quantitate, et sic est varie magnum in diversis partibus illius hostie, sed non in se formaliter magnum, aliqua tali magnitudine. Sed multi mussitant super isto quod sequitur ex ista sententia quod corpus Christi non sit in Eucharistia aliter quam in signo sic autem est in ymagine crucifixi. Hic dicunt fideles quod corpus Christi non est in celo vel in humanitate assumpta aliter quam in signo, est tamen ibi aliter quam ut in signo. Nam Sacramentum in quantum hujusmodi est signum, et humanitas est signum, cum Luce 2<sup>o</sup> dicitur *quod positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum et in signum cui contradicetur*. Et secunda pars conclusionis patet ex hoc quod alius est modus essendi signum corporis Christi, et alius modus essendi vere et realiter virtute verborum Domini corporis Christi. Conceditur tamen quod isti duo modi inseparabiliter comitantur. Hoc tamen signum infinitum est prestancius quam signa corporis Christi in lege veteri, vel ymagine in lege nova, cum sit simul veritas et figura. Intellico autem dicta mea in ista materia, secundum logicam scripture, nec non secundum logicam sanctorum doctorum et decreti Romane Ecclesie. Quos suppono prudenter fuisse locutos. Non enim valet scandalizare totam Romanam Ecclesiam quum dicit panem et vinum esse post consecrationem, corpus et sanguinem Jesu Christi, et non obstante errore glosomium ista fides mansit continue in Ecclesia eciam apud laicos. Cum ergo fidelis non optaret comedere corporaliter sed spiritualiter corpus Christi, patet quod omnis sciens aptavit illum modum spiritualem essendi corporis sui cum hostia que debet comedi a fidele: Alium autem modum essendi cum foret superfluum abstraherat. Unde infideles murmurant cum illis qui abierunt retrorsum dicentes, *Durus est hic sermo*, cum corpus sit corporaliter comedendum, vel cum illis observatoribus legalium legis veteris qui non putant esse prestanciorem gradum in signo Eucharistie quam fuit in signis legis veteris, vel quam est in signis humanitus institutis. Et hii fingunt quod accidens potest fieri corpus Christi, et quod melius et planius dixisset Christus hoc accidens sine subjecto significat corpus meum. Utraque autem istarum ex ignorantia graduum in signis est infideli deterior. Teneamus ergo quod virtute verborum Christ



panis iste fit et est miraculose corpus Christi ultra possibilitatem signi ad hoc humanitus instituti. Verumtatem ista unitas vel unio sive accepcio non attingit ad unitatem ydempticam numeralem vel unionem ypostaticam, sed creditur quod sic immediate post illam, et sic accidentia corporalia corporis Christi ut quantitates corporales corporis Christi videntur non multiplicari comitantur ad corpus Christi in hostia, et per idem nec alia accidentia respectiva que fundantur in istis quod omnia ista accidentia perexigunt esse corporale subjecti sui ubicunque fuerint. Ut si hic sic septipedalitas, color, vel substantia corporalis corporis Christi tunc hic est quod corpus Christi est septipedale coloratum et corporaliter glorificatum, et per consequens Christus habet hic existenciam corporalem, quod cum sit falsum negandum est talia accidentia secundum conditiones materiales multiplicari comitantur ad corpus Christi in hostia consecrata. Partes autem quantitative corporis Christi habent esse spirituale in hostia, immo habent esse sacramentale ibidem, cum sunt quodammodo quelibet pars quantitativa istius hostie, et multo magis multiplicatur anima Christi per hostiam secundum quoddam esse spirituale quam est illud esse quod habet in corpore Christi in cœlo. Et causa hujus multiplicationis anime Christi est quod ipsa est principalius ipso corpore persona verbi. Qualitates autem immateriales quæ subjectantur in anima Christi multiplicantur cum ipsa per hostiam, ut scientia, justitia et alie virtutes animæ Christi que non requirunt pre-existentiam corporalem Christi ubicunque fuerint. Ipse enim fuerunt cum ipso, quia cum ejus anima in inferno. Sicut ergo per totam hostiam est Christus virtuosus: sic est per illam virtus Christi. Unde Autor *de divinis officiis* quod propter esse spirituale corporis Christi in hostia, est ibi concomitancia Angelorum, quia tamen sophisticari potest ista oblatio ex defectu potestatis fidei, et verborum presbyteri ideo <sup>1</sup>meti religiosi adorant conditionaliter hanc hostiam et in corpore Christi quod est substantialiter et ineffabiliter quietati. Sed ydiote remurmurant querentes quomodo corpus est ille panis sanctus cum non <sup>2</sup>sint idem secundum substantiam vel naturam? Sed ipsos oportet addiscere fidem de incarnatione quomodo due substantie vel nature valde differentes sunt idem suppositum et tamen non sunt eedem, quia utraque earum est Christus et tunc possunt a posse non ascendere ad cognoscendam istam miraculosam unionem servata utraque natura non ydemptifica verbo Dei. Sed oportet eos cognoscere gradus in signis, et deposcere infundabilem blasphemiam de fictis miraculis ascendentis et credere virtutem verborum Christi, et tunc possunt cognoscere quomodo ille panis est <sup>3</sup>bn. miraculose, vere, realiter, spiritualiter, virtualiter, et sacramentaliter corpus Christi. Sed grossi non contentantur de istis modis, sed exigunt quod panis ille vel saltem per ipsum sit substantialiter, et corporaliter corpus Christi. Sic enim volunt zelus blasphemorum Christum comedere sed non possunt. Adducitur autem super hoc testimonium Hugonis de Sancto Victore libro 2<sup>o</sup> *de Sacramentis* parte 8. cap. 7. Quem-

<sup>1</sup> Sic MS.<sup>2</sup> Ibid.<sup>3</sup> Ibid pro bene.



admodum species illic cernitur res vel substantia ibi esse non creditur : Sic res ibi veraciter et substantialiter presens creditur cujus species non cernitur. Exemplum ad illum Doctorem patet, quia ille subtiliter inculcat catholicam sententiam supradictam, vult enim quod species sencibiliter cernitur ibi, et quod ista species sit essentialiter panis et vinum quod etiam cernitur licet per accidens, ideo sepe vocat ipsum panem et vinum, que sunt alimenta solita et principalis substantia alimenti ut patet in dicto cap. et cap. sequenti. Ibidem autem dicit panem dicit habere rem vel substantiam que creditur non ibi cernitur, cum sit corpus Christi. Sed pro isto adverbio substantialiter notandum quodcumque sumitur simpliciter pro modo substantie sic quod idem sit corpus Christi esse ibi substantialiter, et esse ibi modo substantie. Et sic loquitur Hugo. Quandoque superaddit reduplicative rationem corporis in quantum talis substantia. Et sic proprie intelligo ego adverbia. Unde eodem cap. dicitur quod corporaliter secundum corporis et sanguinis Christi virtutem Christum sumimus in altari. Quod oportet sic intelligi quod spiritualiter sumimus carnem Christi. Et iste est verus modus corporis licet non sit modus consequens corpus in quantum corpus. Quia Johannis 6. dicit Christus *Caro non prodest quicquam*. Cum nec sententia carnalis, nec manducatio corporalis corporis Domini quicquam prodest. Nam insensibiliter sumitur quantum ad formam corporis sui, ut dicit doctor cap. 9, ejusdem partis, sed visibiliter quoad substantiam sacramenti. Unde talis equivocatio facta est in adverbis ad excellenciam Eucharistie super figuras legis veteris declarandam. Nostra autem locutio est propria, quia aliter oporteret concedere quod esse substantialiter sit esse accidentaliter; esse corporaliter, sit esse spiritualiter; esse carnaliter sit esse virtualiter; et esse dimensive sit esse multiplicative; et periret modo non distincio. Sicut ergo conceditur quod corpus Christi cernitur vel tenetur in symbolis, vel in hostia et sentitur, quod tamen non sic <sup>1</sup>mo<sup>a</sup> quia non secundum naturam corporis Christi vel in quantum ipsum corpus. Sic conceditur quod corpus Christi est in hostia modo accidentali substantie quia modo spirituali et sacramentali presupponente tres alios modos realiores ipsius corporis existere causative : Sic autem non fuit in figuris legis veteris, vel in figuris legis nostre humanitus institutis. Et sic possunt distingui modus prior quo est in celo, et modus posterior quo est in sacramento. Sic autem in tribus discrepamus a sectis signorum. Primo in hoc quod ponimus venerabile sacramentum altaris esse naturaliter panem et vinum, sed sacramentaliter corpus Christi et sanguinem; sed secta contrari fingit ipsum esse vinum ignotum : Accidens sine substantia subjecta. Et ex ista radice erroris pullulant nimis multe varietates erroris. Nam secta nostra adorat sacramentum, non ut panis aut vini substantiam : Sed ut corpus Christi et sanguinem. Sed secta cultorum accidentium, ut credo, adorat hoc sacramentum non ut est accidens

<sup>1</sup> Sic MS.

sine subjecto, sed ut est signum sacramentale corporis Christi et sanguinis. Signa autem cultus sui ostendunt quod adorant crucem et alias ymagines Ecclesie que habent minorem rationem adoracionis quam hoc venerabile sacramentum. Nam in quacunque substantia creata est deitas realius et substancialius quam corpus Christi est in hostia consecrata? Ideo nisi ipsa fuerit virtute verborum Christi corpus <sup>1</sup>sum. non est ratio tante excellencie adorandum. Tercio secta nostra per equivocacionis detectionem, et aliarum fallaciarum tollit argucias adversancium, ut aliqua locuntur sancti de sacramento ut panis, et aliqua dicunt de isto non ut ydemptice, sed sacramentaliter corpus Christi. Sed secta adversariorum <sup>2</sup>inculpat difficultates inutiles, et fingit consequenter miracula de operacionibus accidentis. Sunt autem ex nostra sententia diffinicio summi judicis Domini nostri Jesu Christi qui in cena noctis sue tradicionis accepit panem in manibus suis, benedixit et fregit et manducare ex eo generaliter precepit, *Hoc*, inquit, *est corpus meum*. Cum autem daretur panis quem tocies replicavit pro nomine dandi et totum residuum <sup>3</sup>ppo. sigt. illi qui mentiri non potest ipsum esse corpus suum: manifestum est ex autoritate et dictis Christi, quod panis ille fuit sacramentaliter corpus suum. Adducantur autem septem testes ad testificandum Ecclesie judicis hujus sentenciam. Primus est beatus Ignacius Apostolis contemporaneus qui ab illis et cum illis <sup>4</sup>acce a Domino sensum suum, et recitat eum Lincolniensis super Ecclesiastica ierarchia cap. 3. *Sacramentum*, inquit, *vel Eukaristia est corpus Christi*. Secundus testis Beatus Cyprianus in epistola sua de corpore Christi. *Calicem*, inquit, *accipiens in die passionis benedixit, dedit discipulis suis, dicens*, Accipite et bibite ex hoc omnes, hic est sanguis testamenti qui pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum; Amen dico vobis, non bibam amodo ex ista creatura vitis usque in diem quo vobiscum bibam novum in regno patris mei. *Quam parte*, inquit sanctus, *invenimus calicem mixtum fuisse, quem obtulet, et vinum quem sanguinem suum dixit*. Tercius testis est Beatus Ambrosius in lib. suo *de sacramentis* et ponitur *de consecratione* dis. 2. cap. *Panis est in Altari*. Quod erat panis, inquit, *ante consecrationem jam corpus Christi post consecrationem*. Quartus testis est Beatus Augustinus in quodam sermone exponens illud Luce 34, *cognoverunt eum in fraccione panis: Non omnis panis*, inquit, *sed accipiens benedictionem Christi fit corpus Christi*. Et ponitur in Canone ubi supra. Quintus testis est Beatus Jeromius in epistola ad Elvideam, *Nos*, inquit, *audiamus panem quem fregit Dominus, deditque discipulis suis esse corpus Domini Salvatoris, ipso dicente ad eos*, Accipite et comedite, hoc est corpus meum. Sextus testis est Decretum Romane Ecclesie, que sub Nicolao 2<sup>o</sup> et 114 Epist. <sup>5</sup>dectavit prudenter secundum rectam logicam que debet capi a tota Ecclesia, quod panis et vinum que in altari ponuntur sunt post consecrationem non solum sacramentum, sed verum corpus et sanguis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, ut patet in can. ubi supra. Septimus testis est usus

<sup>1</sup> Sic. MS. <sup>2</sup> pro inculcat. <sup>3</sup> proprio signavit. <sup>4</sup> Sic MS. pro accepit. <sup>5</sup> Ibid.



Ecclesie que in canone misse habet, *ut hec oblatio fiat nobis corpus et sanguis Domini nostri Ihesu Christi*. Illam autem oblationem vocat Ecclesia terrenam substantiam, sicut patet in secreto medie misse Natalis Domini. Ista autem septem testimonia sic inficiunt glossatores, qui dicunt tacite omnia talia dicta sanctorum debere intelligi per suum contrarium, et sic negari finaliter cum scriptura. Penset itaque fidelis si sanum fuerit hereticare vel in hoc scandalizare hos testes et multos similes. Penset 2<sup>o</sup> quid tenderet ad honorem corporis Christi vel devocionem populi quod ipsum corpus dignissimum sit unum accidens sine subjecto, quod Augustinus dicit esse non posse, vel si est, est unum vel aliud abjectissimum in natura. Tunc inquam foret <sup>1</sup> Augs meus ut constat hereticus qui in epistola 14 ad Bonifacium de fide Ecclesie ita scribit. *Si, inquit, Sacramenta quandam similitudinem rerum earum quarum sacramenta sunt non habent, omnino sacramenta non essent. Ex hac etiam similitudine plerumque jam ipsarum rerum nomina accipiunt. Sicut ergo secundum quendam modum sacramentum corporis Christi corpus Christi est, et sacramentum sanguinis Christi, sanguis Christi est, ita sacramentum fidei fides est.* Ubi planum est quod loquitur de Sacramento <sup>2</sup>scatlico quod fingitur accidens sine subjecto. Sed que rogo similitudo ejus ad corpus Christi? Revera fructus illius demencie foret blasphemare in Deum, scandalizare Sanctos, et illudere Ecclesie per mendacia accidentis. Ad tantum quidem Testimonium Sanctorum per glossatores subvertitur, quod committo sensui equivoco quodcunque dictum etiam scripture non facit fidem. Postremo scribit Hyllarius ut recitatur inde *consecra. di. 2. Corpus Christi quod sumitur de altari figura est dum panis et vinum extra videtur: Videas autem cum corpus et sanguis Christi in veritate interius creditur.* Ecce quam plane panis et vinum sunt hoc sacramentum, ut dicit decretum *Ego Berengarius*. Unde ad delegendum equivocacionem illius materie scribitur ibidem secundum verba Jeronimi, *De hac quidem hostia que in Christi commemoratione mirabiliter fit, edere licet.* Ubi planum est quod loquitur de esu corporali et distinguit inter has duas hostias secundum substantias vel naturas. Licet panis iste sit secundum rationem alia quam sacramentum ipsum corpus, ut ipse sanctus dicit in Epistola ad <sup>3</sup>Elbideam, ut recitatur superius. Et patet quam spissi cultores signorum sunt in materia ista heretici. Nedum quia imponunt heresim fidelibus qui elucidant istam fidem; et accusacio de heresi obligat ad penam talionis; verum quia falsificant et sic negant Dominum Jesum Christum. Nam nihil debemus secundum fidem Evangelii Christo credere, si non asseruit panem quem cepit in manibus ac fregit, esse corpus suum: sicut dicit Augustinus super <sup>4</sup>p. 66. *Si ego quicquam dixero, nolite ex hoc credere; sed si Christus dicit, ve qui non credit.* Hec debemus credere aliquem secundum Evangelium si non istum. Ideo ve generacioni adultere que plus credit testimonio Innocencii vel Raymundi quam sensui Evangelii capto a

<sup>1</sup> Sic MS. pro Augustinus.

<sup>3</sup> Helvidium.

<sup>2</sup> Sic MS.

<sup>4</sup> Sic MS. pro Psalmum.



Testibus supradictis. Idem enim esset scandalizare illos in isto et imponere eis heresim ex perversione sensus scripture, precipue et iterum de ore perverso Apostate accumulantis super Ecclesiam Romanam mendacia quibus fingit quod Ecclesia posterior priori contraria correxit fidem quod sacramentum istud sit accidens sine subjecto, et non verus panis et vinum, ut dicit Evangelium cum decreto. Nam teste Augustino tale accidens sine subjecto non potest sacerdos conficere. Et tamen tantum magnificant sacerdotes Baal, mendaciter indubie juxta scolam patris sui, consecracionem hujus accidentis quod reputant missas alias indignas audiri, vel dissensientes suis mendaciis inhabiles alicubi graduari; sed credo quod finaliter veritas vincet eos.

## No. IV.

"We beleve as Crist and his Apostolus han taught us, that the Sacrament of the Auter white and ronde, and lyk tyl oure bede or ost unsacrede is veray Goddus body in fourme of brede, and if it be broken in thre parties as the Kirke uses, or elles in a thousand, everylk one of these parties is the same Goddus body, and ryth so as the persone of Crist is veray God and verray man, verray Godhede, and verray manhede ryth so as holy Kirke many hundrith wynter has trowyde, the same Sacrament is verray Goddus body and verray brede: as it is forme of Goddus body and forme of brede as techith Christ and his Apostolus. And therefore Seynt Poule nemeth it never but when he callus it brede, and he be our beleve took his wit of God in this: and the argument of heretykus agayne this sentens, <sup>1</sup> lyth to a Cristene man to assolve. [And right as it is heresie to belive that Crist is a spirit and no body:] so it is heresie for to trowe that this Sacrament is Goddus body and no brede: for it is both togedur. But the most heresie that God sufferyde come tyl his Kyrke is to trowe that this Sacrament is an accident withouten a substance, and may on no wyse be Goddus body: for Crist sayde bewitnesse of John that *this brede is my body*. And if the say that be this skylle that holy Kyrke hat bene in heresy many hundred wynter, sothe it is, specially sythen the fende was lousede that was bewitnesse of angele to John Evangeliste after a thousande wynter that Crist was stenyde to heven. But it is to suppose that many seyntes that dyede in the mene tyme before her death were purede of this erreure. Owe how grete diversitie is betwene us that trowes that this Sacrament is verray brede in his kynde, and between heretykus that tell us that this is an accident withouten a sujet. For before that the fende fader of lesyngus was lowside, was never this gabbyng contryvede. And how grete diversitie is between us that trowes that this Sacra-

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<sup>1</sup> easy.

ment that in his kinde is veray brede and sacramentally Goddus body, and between heretykes that trowes and telles that this Sacrament may on none wise be Goddus body. For I dare surly say that yf this were soth Cryst and his seynts dyede heretykus, and the more partye of holy Kirke belevyth now heresy, and before devout men supposen that this counsaile of Freres in London, was with the herydene. For they put an heresie upon Crist and seynts in hevyne, wherefore the erth tremblide.<sup>1</sup> Fay land maynnus voice answeyde for God als it did in tyme of his passione, whan he was dampnyde to bodely deth. Crist and his modur that in gronde had destroyde all heresies kep his Kyrke in right belefe of this Sacrament, and move the King and his rewme to ask sharply of his Clerkus this offis that all his possessioneres on pain of lesying all her temporaltes telle the King and his rewme with sufficient grownding what is this Sacrament; and all the Orders of Freres on payne of lesing her legians telle the King and his rewme with gode grounding what is the Sacrament; for I am certaine of the thridde part of Clergie that defendus thise doutes that is here said, that they will defende it on paine of her lyfe."—Knighton de Event. Angl. apud X. Scripto res, coll. 2649, 2650.

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L. page 319.

Before quitting the subject of these proceedings in Oxford, in the November of 1382, it will be proper to examine the grounds of the doubt that has been expressed, as to Wycliffe's having been present in person on that occasion. This doubt has arisen from the circumstance, that his name does not occur in the archiepiscopal register relating to what was there done. Such an omission, supposing the facts to have been as we have stated, is certainly remarkable. But it must be borne in mind, that public records were not so secure against injury, either in the way of insertions or omissions, in those times, as in our own. We have seen, that even the rolls of parliament in that age, were not safe against the appearance of entries, set forth as statutes of the realm, which neither lords nor commons had sanctioned, or even heard of, until apprised of their existence in that surreptitious shape. The pretended statute to which we allude had been procured by the clergy, who wished to be vested with powers to crush the Wycliffites by force; and there is reason, to think that Courtney himself was a party to the fraud thus attempted. The causes, moreover, which precluded the prelates and

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<sup>1</sup> Ipse Wycliff in 4 libro Trialogi sui ter dampnati capitulo 36. prædictum concilium contra eum celebratum A. D. 1380. Londoniis vocat Concilium Terræmotus. *Gascoigne Dict. Theo. MS.*



their coadjutors from citing Wycliffe to appear before them at their previous meetings, and which, supposing him to have been present at Oxford, precluded them still from adopting harsh measures in relation to him, may have left them little disposed to make a record of proceedings which could not be interpreted otherwise than as the record of a virtual defeat. Even supposing the record to have been faithfully made at the time, we can imagine the feeling that may have prompted to its mutilation, or to the entire substraction of this portion of it afterwards.

But not to dwell on such possibilities, the register itself apprizes us that it must not be taken as more than a very imperfect record of what was done. The convocation assembled on the 18th of November, and met from day to day by successive adjournments until the twenty-fourth. On *this last day*, Reppington and Ashton read a sort of recantation, and steps were taken to compel the students to renounce on oath the conclusions which the synod in London had condemned. But of what was done at the preceding meetings no information is given. Among the various proceedings of that interval, of which we have no record, may have been the examination of Wycliffe.<sup>1</sup> The positive evidence in favour of Wycliffe's presence before the convocation is so strong, as to oblige us to attach considerable importance to this omission.

I. For in the first place, here are two papers from the pen of Wycliffe, drawn up by him as confessions of his faith on the Eucharist; the one in Latin, and, as might be expected, learned and scholastic; the other in English, and naturally less extended and more popular. The presumption—we may almost say the certainty here is, that these papers were prepared to be presented to some authority of the time—but to what authority? In the summer of 1381, Wycliffe was prohibited from teaching his doctrine on this article in the University, and he then retired to Lutterworth. In the spring of the following year, proceedings were instituted by Archbishop Courtney against the disciples of the Reformer, in reference to their general doctrine, and it is at Oxford in the November of this year that the opinions of the alleged teachers of false doctrine are made the special matter of investiga-

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<sup>1</sup> Convocatio praelatorum et cleri Cantuar. provinciae in Ecclesia conventuali sanctae Frideswydæ Oxon. ad diem 18. mensis Novembris facta. Ex reg. Courtney fol. 33. seq.

Quo die post missam et alia sacra, certificatorium domini episc. London. legebatur, ac RRMus causas convocationis prædictæ exponebat; videl. "quod pro quibusdam hæreticis, qui nuper in regno pullularunt, penitus extirpandis, pro delictis et excessibus corrigendis, ac injuriis ecclesiæ sanctæ illatis reformandis, necnon pro aliquo competenti subsidio concedendo, ad vitanda et repellenda pericula, quæ ecclesiæ, regi, et regno Angliæ notorie imminabant, ipsam convocationem ibidem fieri tunc decrevit."

Dein post varias continuationes xxiv. die mensis Novembris, dominus Philippus Rep-pyngdon, canonicus regularis domus Leycestr. abjuravit omnes conclusiones hæreticas sub eo, qui sequitur, tenore verborum: &c. &c.—Wilkins, Concilia III, 172.



tion. Knighton, the historian, so often cited in these pages, was a contemporary of Wycliffe; his residence in Leicester was not many miles from Lutterworth; he was evidently much alive to everything concerning the proceedings of Wycliffe and his followers, and he has in consequence given us a fuller account of them, than has descended to us from any other writer of that age. Now we have seen the clearness with which this historian states that Wycliffe did appear before the prelates and divines in Oxford, and the account given of his conduct there.

It is true, this historian seems to speak of the Reformer as having been present at an earlier meeting of this synod in London, which is not probable from the evidence before us. But which is most likely—that Knighton, knowing Wycliffe to have been present at the meeting in Oxford, should have supposed him to have been present also at a preceding meeting—or that he should have described him as being present at two of these meetings, when in fact he was not present at either of them? Knighton may have inferred that Wycliffe was present at the first meeting of the synod from circumstances, and without sufficient warrant; and he may have been open to some false impression as to the things that were said or done at Oxford; but that he should have given an account so positive and ample, of the Reformer's manner of proceeding before his prosecutors in 1382, while, in fact, he was not, in any instance, placed in such a position, is to me incredible.

II. In the next place, the account given by Wood, (*Antiq. Oxon.* 189.) is to the effect of that given by Knighton, and shows that with him, the presence of Wycliffe before Courtney and the bishops, at Oxford, was a settled fact.<sup>2</sup> Nor are we warranted in supposing that Wood's account is derived wholly from Knighton. He was manifestly acquainted with other evidence, bearing on this point, which contributed to place it in his view beyond all reasonable doubt. He makes mention, for example, of no less than six ecclesiastics, who distinguished themselves by writing against the confession, beginning—*Sæpe confessus sum, &c.*—as being a confession made by Wycliffe; a confession, accordingly, which the Reformer *must have made*, and which, if made at all, must have been made before the prelates at Oxford, for there is no later occasion on which we can suppose it to have been made, and we have evidence to adduce showing that it could not have been made earlier.

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<sup>1</sup> Wood's language is as follows:—'Is ergo periculis undique incinctus, neque quo se pacto iisdem expediret reperiens, doctrinam suam jam secundo retractare coactus est; quod Oxoniæ præstituto die fecit, præsentibus cum Universitatis Cancellario, et Doctoribus quamplurimis, Archiepiscopo *Cantuariensi*, Episcopo *Lincolniensis* (Wycliffe's diocesan) *Nordovicensi*, *Wygorniensi*, *Londiniensi*, *Sarisburiensi*, and *Herefordiensi*; ingenti Nominum confluxu circumdatis. Ibi ergo fidei confessionem palam recitavit Wicliffius, quam in hunc modum auspicatus comparat.

*Sæpe confessus sum et adhuc confiteo quod idem Corpus Christi, &c. &c.*

III. If the Courtney register does not contain the record on this point we might have expected, there is a record bearing upon it at the close of the Sudbury register which deserves our attention. The document published by the Chancellor of Oxford in 1381 condemning the doctrine of Wycliffe on the Eucharist, is inserted in the archiepiscopal register of Canterbury in the following year; and appended to this entry is the following paragraph; ‘Ista pre-  
 ‘dicta condemnatio promulgata est publice in scholis Augustinentium ipso  
 ‘Magistro Joanne sedente in Cathedra et determinatio contrarium, sed con-  
 ‘fusus est ista audita condemnatione. Sed tamen dixit quod nec Cancellarius  
 ‘nec aliquis de suis complicibus poterat suam sententiam infringere,  
 ‘se in hoc ostendens hereticum pertinacem. Sed post ad sue heresis majorem  
 ‘manifestationem et sue pertinacie ostentacionem, alias publice a condemnatione  
 ‘Cancellarii et judicio predicto appellavit, non ad Papam, vel  
 ‘ad ordinarium Ecclesiasticum: Sed hereticus adherens seculari potestati,  
 ‘in defensionem sui Erroris et Heresis appellavit ad Regem Ricardum, volens  
 ‘per hoc se protegere regali potestate, quod non puniretur, vel emendaretur  
 ‘Ecclesiastica potestate. Et post appellationem advenit nobilis dominus,  
 ‘dux egregus et miles strenuus, sapiensque Consiliarius, Dux Lancastrie,  
 ‘sacre Ecclesie filius fidelis, prohibens Magistro predicto Johanni quod de  
 ‘cetero non loqueretur de ista materia. Sed nec ipse contemperans suo  
 ‘ordinario Cancellario, nec tam strenuo domino incepit Confessionem quandam  
 ‘facere, in qua continebatur omnis error pristinus, sed secrecius sub  
 ‘velamine vario verborum, in qua discit suum conceptum, et visus est suam  
 ‘sententiam probare. Sed velut hereticus pertinax refutavit omnes doctores  
 ‘de secundo Millinario in materia de sacramento Altaris, et dixit, omnes illos  
 ‘errasse preter Berengarium cujus opinio damnatur de consecrat. dist 2 Ego  
 ‘Berengarius, et ipsum et suos complices; dixit palam Sathanam et potestatem  
 ‘habere in Magistro sententiarum et in omnibus qui fidem Catholicam  
 ‘predicaverunt. (Wilkins. Concilia III. 171.)

This record does not say in so many words, that Wycliffe made the confession mentioned before the prelates at Oxford in November 1382,—but it says several things that are material; First, that Wycliffe did make a public confession of his doctrine on the Eucharist subsequently to his being silenced in Oxford in 1381; second, it so describes the confession made by him subsequently to that time, as to show that the confession intended, is that beginning,—*Sæpe confessus sum &c*;—and thirdly, it informs us that this confession was not made until after the duke of Lancaster had admonished Wycliffe to abstain from giving further utterance to such obnoxious opinions; and the duke did not take this course even towards Hereford and Reppington until the synod of the summer of 1382 had met several times, and we have no evidence of his having so expressed himself to Wycliffe, except as indicated in the above record, which seems to say, that sometime after Wycliffe had published his appeal to the King and Parliament, the duke came to Oxford, admonished the Reformer there to the above effect, and that the Reformer,



notwithstanding such counsel, 'began to make' the confession,—*Sæpe confessus sum*, &c. Two conclusions seem to follow from this evidence ;—first that Wycliffe did make the public confession attributed to him on the doctrine of the Eucharist; and, second, that the only occasion on which we can suppose it to have been made was before the clergy in Oxford in the November in 1382. The confession intended, and of which we have given the substance in the proper place, will be found in p. 564, *et seq.* in this appendix.

Concerning the record cited from the Sudbury register, we may observe, that it bears all the marks of being by a contemporary, by some one who was in Oxford in 1381. So minute is the account given by the writer, that he would seem to have been a functionary present at the scene which he describes. He informs us that when the chancellor and his coadjutors had agreed upon their document, they sent parties to give it due publicity; that these parties found the Reformer in the school of the Augustinians, seated in his chair, and lecturing on the very doctrine in question to his students; and then follows a description of his appearing as one taken by surprise, and as somewhat confused; of his soon recovering his self-possession; and a record of the words with which he repelled the attack thus made upon him. In what follows there is the same closeness of description. The duke is before us as urging Wycliffe to desist from the course he is disposed to take; and the Reformer as declining such counsel even from so high a quarter. Ceasing to regard the duke '*he began to make a certain confession*,' (says the writer) 'in which the whole of his former error was contained, but more covertly, under the veil of a change of words, and wherein he declared his notion, and seemed to make good his opinion &c.' Such is the official record concerning proceedings at Oxford in relation to Wycliffe in 1382, which appears to have been deemed sufficient at the time.

The evidence from all these sources, from Knighton, from Wood, and from the Archbishopal register, taken together, is, with us, decisive as to the appearance of Wycliffe before the convocation in Oxford at the time mentioned. The negative evidence from the Courtney register does not weigh with us against so much positive evidence from other sources. Sudbury was beheaded in June 1381, and the record given above must have been made more than twelvemonths later, and in the time of Courtney. We may add, that the notion of Wycliffe's being wholly passed over in a course of proceedings which bore so heavily on persons suspected of being his followers, is quite as inexplicable as the notion of his having passed such an ordeal as we suppose, and with such results. In either view, we must suppose that there were special reasons for not dealing with his case as with others, for in either view the master is spared as the disciples were not. Wycliffe had sinned with much more effect than Hereford or Ashton, and would no doubt have suffered more, had not his enemies seen that there were circumstances in his case which rendered such a course inexpedient and dangerous.



M. page 322.

*Dr. Wiclif's Letter of Excuse to Pope Urban VI.*

I have joyfully to telle alle trew men the bileve that I hold, and <sup>1</sup>algatis to the Pope. For I suppose, that if any faith be rightful and geven of God, the Pope will gladly conserve it: and if my faith be error, the Pope will wisely amend it. I suppose over this, that the Gospel of Christ be part of the corps of God's lawe. For I believe that Jesu Christ that gaf in his own persoun this Gospel is very God and very mon, and be this it passes all other lawes. I suppose over this, that the Pope be most oblishid to the keping of the Gospel among all men that liven here. For the Pope is highest vicar that Christ has here in erth. For <sup>2</sup>moreness of Christ's vicars is not measured by worldly moreness, bot by this, that this vicar, <sup>3</sup>sues more Christ by virtuous living: for thus teches the Gospel. That this is the sentence of Christ and of his Gospel I take as bileve; that Christ for time that he walked here was most poore mon of alle both in spirit and in <sup>4</sup>haveing; for Christ says that he had noht for to rest his hede on. And over this I take as bileve, that no mon schulde sue the Pope, ne no saint that now is in hevене, bot in <sup>4</sup>alsmyche as he sued Christ: for James and John errid, and Peter and Powl sinned. Of this I take as holesome counseile, that the Pope leeve his worldly lordschip to worldly lords, as Christ gaf him, and move speedily all his Clerks to do so: for thus did Christ, and taught thus his disciplis, till the fende had blynded this world. And if I erre in this sentence I will mekely be amendid, hif by the death, hif it be skilfnl, for that I hope were gode to me. And if I might traveile in my own porsoun, I wolde with God's will go to the Pope. Bot [Christ] has nedid me to the contrary, and taught me more obeishe to God than to mon. And I suppose of our Pope that he will not be Antichrist, and reverse Christ in this wiking to the contrary of Christ's wilie. For if he summons ageyns resoun by him or any of his, and pursue this unskilful summoning, he is an open Antichrist. And merciful entent excusid not Petir that ne Christ <sup>6</sup>clepid him Sathanas: so blynd entent and wicked consail excuses not the Pope here, bot if he aske of trewe Prestis that they traveile more than they may, 'tis not excused by resoun of God that ne is in Antichrist. For our bileve techis us that our blessid God suffrys us not to be temptyed more than we may; how schuld a mon aske such service. And therefore pray we to God for our Pope Urban the <sup>7</sup>Sex that his old holy entent be not quenched by his enemys. And Christ that may not lye seis that the enemys of a man be especially his homelye <sup>8</sup>meinthe, and this is <sup>9</sup>soth of men and fendis.—Bibl. Bod. MS.

<sup>1</sup> always.<sup>2</sup> greatness.<sup>3</sup> follows.<sup>4</sup> possessions.<sup>5</sup> as much.<sup>6</sup> called.<sup>7</sup> sixth.<sup>8</sup> family.<sup>9</sup> truth.

## N. page 468.

The instrument following, besides its evidence as to the time and circumstances of the Reformer's death, will suffice to shew that the plea of ill health as urged in the preceding letter was a valid plea. We here learn that paralysis, the disease of which Wycliffe died, was a disease under which he was known to have been suffering the last two years of his life.

Narratio de morte Subitanea Joannis Wycliffe scripta propria manu Thomæ Gascoigne, qui olim Doctor erat sacræ Theologiæ in Academia Oxoniensi.

## Jesu Maria.

Magister Joannes Wycliffe Anglicus per Dominum Thomam Arundell Episcopum Cantuariensem fuit post mortem suam, excommunicatus et postea per Doctorem in Sacra Theologia Oxoniæ, sci. Magistrum Ricardum Fleming Eboracensis Dioceseos, et nunc Episcopum Lincolnensem fuit exhumatus et ossa ejus combusta, et cineres ejus in aqua juxta Lyttyrwort projecti fuerunt ex mandata Pape Martini V. Et iste Wycliff fuit paralyticus per duos annos ante mortem suam, et anno Domini 1384 obiit in die sabbati in die Sancti Sylvestris in vigilia Circumcisionis Domini et in eodem anno sc: in die sanctorum Innocentium audiens missam in Ecclesia sua de Lyttyrwort circa elevationem sacramenti Altari decedit percussus magna paralysi et specialiter in lingua ita quod nec tunc, nec postea loqui potuit usque ad mortem suam. In introitu autem suo in Ecclesiam suam loquebatur, sed sic ut percussus paralysi in eadem die loqui non potuit, nec unquam postea loquebatur. Hæc dixit mihi Dominus Joannes Horn sacerdos octogenarius qui fuit sacerdos parochialis cum Wycliff per duos annos usque ad diem mortis Wycliff, et mihi juravit sic dicendo; sicut respondebo coram Deo, novi ista fuisse vera, et quia vidi testimonium perhibui.

*Hoc ille dixit mihi doctori Gascoigno Anno Domini 1441º.*

Cotton. Bibl. Otho. A. 14.





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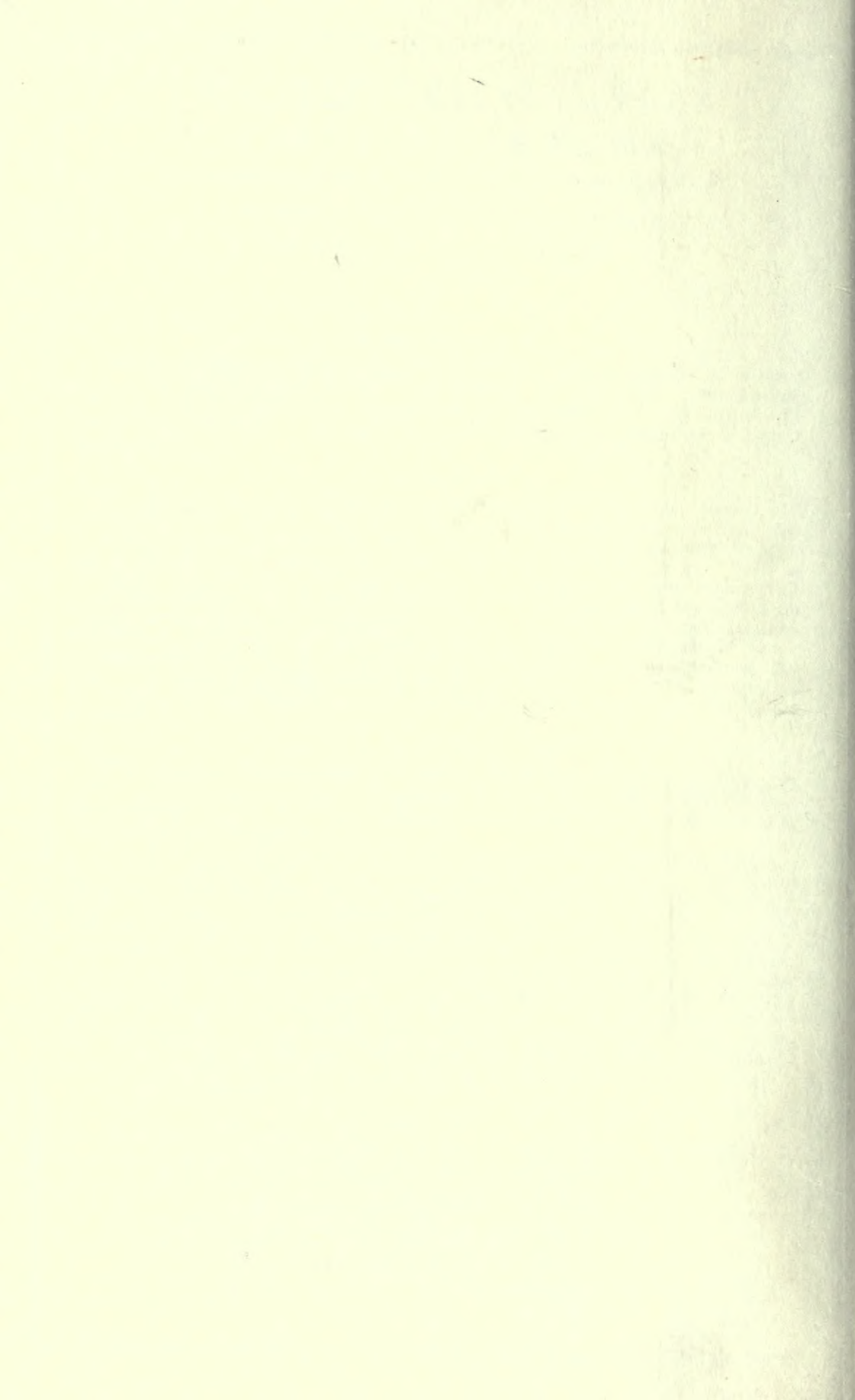
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